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THE REDEEMER:

A SKETCH OF

THE HISTORY OF REDEMPTION.

BY

EDMOND DE PRESSENSÉ.

TRANSLATED FROM THE SECOND EDITION,

BY REV. J. H. MYERS, D.D.

Fac ut possim demonstrare
Quam sit dulce te amare,
Tecum pati, tecum flere,
Tecum semper congaudere.

Christology
Redemption
Lite

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PREFACE.

These chapters are not sermons. The preparation of them was indeed occasioned by preaching a series of sermons upon the work of salvation, but, with the exception of the direct form of address, which I thought it advisable not to change, they have been modified for the press. They form a sketch of the history of redemption, exhibited in its different phases, but particularly in its essential phase, — the life of Jesus Christ.

I have freely drawn from the fountains of cotemporary theology, as was natural. The works of Neander, Lange, Ullmann, Lucke, and Sartorious, the numerous commentaries on the Gospels as well as the writings of the Reformers, and especially Calvin's Harmony of the Gospels, have been largely turned to account. I have not thought it necessary, however, to load my book with notes and citations, for I have received from these great theologians a general impulse rather than specific documents. I have not attempted to set forth a *Life of Jesus* from the scientific point of view, though I have had constantly before my eyes the work of Strauss, whose negative results have entered much farther than is thought into the circulation of cotemporary ideas. But the presentation of the fact of redemption in its totality is of itself a strong defense of Christianity. It is already proving revelation, when it is set forth in its rich unity from the Fall to the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The binding into one sheaf of the scattered ears of wheat exhibits and enhances their beauty.

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Firmly believing in the agreement of Christianity with conscience, I have aimed to exhibit this profound harmony, upon which ultimately rests every attempt to establish the truth of the gospel in the minds of unbelievers. I have sought to give a historic demonstration of the pre-established relation between the human soul and Christ, by showing that the Saviour was not only the free gift of the love of God, but also the Desire of the Nations. With this purpose I have unfolded to a certain extent the work of preparation for Christianity; in my view, that preparation consisted solely in developing the desire for salvation. These considerations appear to me to throw great light upon Judaism and its connection with the general history of humanity.

We know the perverted use that may be made of this agreement between the conscience and revelation. It is perverted and abused whenever men allege their identity, and, professing to see in revelation nothing more than an explanation of conscience, degrade Jesus Christ to the position of one who only interprets the truth previously and fully deposited in us. Nor is the cross, for us, a bare testimony of the love of God, like the flowers beneath our feet and the starry heavens above our heads. The cross is the altar of the great sacrifice which restores man to God and God to man. Christ is for us a Saviour as well as a revealer.

A revelation which is a salvation, a work of deliverance and reconciliation, may be desired by the heart of man, but surely it is not contained, implicitly, in his heart, and could not be hidden away in its lowest recesses. The hunger and thirst for salvation are in the human soul, but the bread and water which appease them must come from above. Conscience is pre-adapted for the reception of Christ, but Christ, the Saviour, is not the less necessary for

the conscience; we can not be nourished by our own hunger.

The Christianity which in our view accords with the higher wants of man is that eternal Christianity which, from the apostolic age to our day, has consoled and saved thousands of poor sinners; it is that which, beginning by declaring the fall of man, leads us to the cross of Golgotha, and bids us there adore the Saviour-God, acknowledged in the fullness of his divinity. Who would dare affirm that Christian consciousness has known any other for eighteen centuries? Whatever may be our respect for science, we declare that science is Christian only so long as it keeps within these bounds.

Whilst in these few pages offering my testimony rather than my system, it is not difficult to perceive toward what end we are gravitating in the advancing movement of Christian scientific thought in our day; it is toward the ever-deepening interpenetration of the human element and the divine element in the conception of Christian minds. We are now summoned, in this great phase of the history of the church, to place ourselves more directly at the very center of Christian truth, whose first and chief dogma is the profound union of humanity and divinity in the person of Jesus Christ. And the great point presented is, by the most thorough study of the Holy Scriptures, and by the wisest use of the accumulated labors of our predecessors, to become increasingly more Christian in our conceptions and belief; that is to say, to throw aside every pagan or Jewish element.

The task is as perilous as it is extended; but whoever has eyes to see must acknowledge that it is imposed by God. Does not the most violent attack upon Christianity proceed from pantheistic fatalism? and is not this a providential intimation that we are to fortify ourselves precisely

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at the point which is threatened? This intimation has been well understood by the first theologians of our times. Neander, Tholuck, Julius Müller, Vinet, and others, have clearly shown it. Precious materials have been amassed for that reconstruction of scientific theology which has been devolved upon our age so harassed with doubts; and we are thoroughly persuaded that the greater number of those who are laboring on in silence are moving in the direction which we have indicated, and desire, in like manner with us, the conciliation without absorption of the human and the divine element. All this is vague, it will be said. It is vague, we reply, as a problem to be resolved. We hope that the perusal of these discourses will more clearly set forth the import of our thought, and will at least make known our *desiderata*. Who could better teach us the true fusion of the human and the divine than he who was the God-man? May we, in our weakness, contribute to render his image more living to our natures. We do not forget that before theology there stands the Christian life; and our most cherished desire would be to make Jesus Christ more loved, in making him better known. Our wishes are admirably summed up in the beautiful words of a great Christian man, which we take for our motto:—

Fac ut possim demonstrare
Quam sit dulce te amare,
Tecum pati, tecum flere,
Tecum semper congaudere.*

* Grant to me the power of proving
All the sweetness Thee of loving,
With Thee weeping, anguish bearing,
In Thy joy for ever sharing.

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THE REDEEMER.

CHAPTER I.

THE FALL AND THE PROMISE.

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—Gen. iii. 15.

SINCE the day when these words sounded forth, the aspect of our world has greatly changed. Then it spread itself out before fallen man like one vast and desolate solitude. Nothing concealed the sadness of his place of exile. The sentence of condemnation was read alike in the sky vailed for the first time, and in the hardened soil, which no longer yielded up its harvests except to the most unrelenting toil. The contrast between the blessed life of Eden and the bitterness of the curse rendered all illusion impossible. Death was dealing his first strokes; sorrow was shedding her first tears: a banished man suddenly torn from his family experiences a less painful shock than Adam on leaving his original condition. To-day nothing is changed, but it is easier to forget the mournful reality which lies at the basis of our existence. For, first of all, we are further removed from the day on

which that condemnation was pronounced. Six thousand years have passed away. In one sense, it has not grown old; it sounds out more terribly over the accumulated dust of so many generations; but its echo vibrates less powerfully in our hearts. It no longer appears in its utter nakedness, if I may thus speak. Civilization has adorned it, and sometimes disguised it. Man's wonderful power over nature often hides from us the fact of his fall. Space and time are conquered. We have given to our thoughts and wishes instruments almost as rapid as themselves. Those who judge of things only from the outward appearance find it difficult to recognize, in this forceful humanity, developing its riches in the vast cities of our day, advancing through successive discoveries to the conquest of nature, which is constantly becoming the yet more docile servant of its will, the race of the first man, who is sorrowfully going forth for the first time into the desert of a world accursed. And yet man is an exile; an exile who may return into favor, but who, until he has found God again, walks on under the burden of God's wrath. And this very fact must constantly be recalled to thy mind, society of the nineteenth century, — society satiated with pleasures, filled with unbelief, intoxicated with thy pride and thy gold, with thy railways and thy riches, — society corrupted and refined, which, notwithstanding thy storms and convulsions, art ever sleeping a deeper sleep of materialism, and art tempted to regard a palace of industry as the Paradise regained. In the midst of these abodes glittering with luxury, in this whirlpool of the elegant world, in this tumult of

affairs, we find the old Adam, the exile of primeval days, him upon whom lies the weight of the original sentence.

Civilized man, the amiable, smiling man of the world, at one time encompassed with the prestige of wealth or of rank, at another adorned with the splendor of scientific and literary attainment, is the artificial man; the real man is sure to appear again at the end. He re-appears in the day of mourning and of death. But his re-appearance is only partial. Death, also, has had her civilization. She is surrounded with pomp or with homage. If we desire to see man such as he is in reality, if we wish to have an exact idea of his condition since the Fall, we must go back to that day which preceded all falsehoods and all illusions, when truth possessed the lightning's clearness and flame; that day when man was about to go forth from Eden. The ground of our destiny will rise in some sort before our eyes; it will be naked and open before us. We shall learn to know, in the future, not only particular sufferings, but the great misfortune, and also the great consolation of humanity. We shall go down into that abyss of the Fall where is to be found, as Pascal has said, the knot of every question. The little questions which our frivolity has magnified, questions relating to industry, art, and politics, will be eclipsed by the question of life or death, — the question of the Fall and of salvation. God grant that I may treat it with all the earnestness which it demands! I design to unfold in a series of discourses the plan of salvation so gloriously realized in Jesus Christ. The theme is comprehended in this

passage. Here the condemnation and the promise are outlined with bold prophetic strokes. The way that leads into exile, and the pathway of return, are at the same time opened before us. It is the first stadium of that long road terminating at the cross, and, by the cross, in heaven; and with a rapid glance we may contemplate it as a whole, as well in its briars and thorns as in its luminous close. By clearly marking the very origin of the enterprise of our salvation, we shall better appreciate its greatness and its total character. We shall see to what depth man had fallen, to what hight God willed to raise him again, and we shall understand that everything in the past, in the present, and in the future, tends to the accomplishment of this vast design. The work of Jesus Christ will be unfolded before us in its infinite proportions. No contemplation can more fully redound to the praise of his grace.

I will put, — saith the Lord, speaking to the serpent, — *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it (her seed) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

The serpent here personifies the power of darkness, the power of sin and death. The seed of the woman must here be understood of that blessed posterity which at the appointed time raised up humanity from its fall. This text teaches us, then, first of all, that the earth is the theater of a perpetual contest between the power of good and the power of evil. It suffices to open one's eyes in order to perceive that an unceasing and mysterious war is waged here below between opposing forces. Do we not see

them incessantly contending in society, in individual life, in nature herself? Is there not turmoil and agitation everywhere? Is not this world a world of contrasts and of discords? The simplest experience teaches us this sad truth; but by experience we are led no further. It does not disclose to us the profound import of this universal struggle.

Human reason, in despair of explaining the conflict, finds in it a fated condition of all development. It judges that it is conformable to the wisdom of God — whenever, at least, it admits a personal God — to impose a harsh law of suffering, without any appreciable motive, upon all earthly progress. Such a mocking explanation is not given in the Scriptures. Whoever has read them with faith can not regard these forces as two blind agents whom chance has unbound and let loose one against the other; they are two free and moral powers, — the power of perdition and the power of salvation. They pursue each other and clasp each other in strife throughout the entire creation, from the soil which we tread beneath our feet, even into the depths of our hearts. The power of sin has left its traces upon the earth, and its impure breath awakens our lusts. At the same time, the power of love shines in the azure of the sky, in the beauties of nature preserved for our gratification; and by this power conscience is inspired. This gigantic contest, prosecuted in every clime and in all ages, in the history of nations and in that of individuals, has for its stake — if I may venture thus to speak — the immortal soul of man. You understand, my brethren, what scope is given by this revelation to the events

which are taking place on the earth. Henceforth the history of humanity is not, any more than the history of the individual, a strange enigma. The cause of all these divisions is the greatest conceivable; eternal interests are involved in the conflict. Behind the visible champions are invisible champions, who are pursuing an end ever the same; on the one side hatred, on the other love. The Lord hath declared, "There is war between the seed of the serpent and the divine seed of the woman." With what emotion ought we to look upon the conflict! and perhaps we have never given it a thought. Careless spectators of this startling drama, the unfolding of which has a direct influence upon our eternal destinies, we have perhaps given heed only to the decorations and the incidents of the scene, or we have gone to sleep, as if the matter in hand were a frivolous tale. And yet heaven and hell are attentive to its issue as respects each one of us. Shall this man be lost, or be saved? Such is the question which they never cease asking.

But wherefore this conflict? Our minds naturally raise this question. Is it a necessary, indispensable condition of human life? Has the earth from all time been delivered up to incessant warfare? No, my brethren; and, if you doubt it, I would appeal to the very place where the words of our text were pronounced. They were spoken in Eden, at the moment, it is true, when Eden was about to be closed against man. Give it a rapid glance; soon it will have disappeared; it will have vanished away, as vanishes the pure and brilliant morning of a burning day. See how all is beautiful, how all is harmonious in that

abode! What splendor in the sky!—what happiness! How easy to see that the power of love alone has been present here, and that it has freely displayed itself in the generous profusion of its gifts!

Are you still in doubt? Do you find it difficult to believe that there has been a time without conflict and without anguish? Contemplate man at the very moment when God is announcing this conflict to him. He flees with confusion before his Father, he trembles, he is afraid, he hides himself. It is because he feels that if the power of sin and death is unchained, it is his hand alone that has done it; because he knows that he has only himself to arraign for that sad and unnatural state of warfare. Believe that for this he feels shame and terror. He is yet new in falsehood. He has not had time to search out many words wherewith to impose upon himself. Later he will be satisfied with sophisms, and will aver that everything is normal in his condition. Confide rather in his first impressions than in his later reasonings. Behold in his inward trouble the cry of conscience, and confess with us that if the power of love alone is no longer manifested to the race, it is because man has departed from his natural path.

Let us gather up and apprehend the testimony of Scripture on this subject. And first, if there is a conflict, it is not because two opposing principles were brought face to face from all eternity. On this supposition, we must acknowledge a God of evil confronting a God of goodness; a God of darkness warring against a God of light; Ahriman against Ormuzd. This would be substantially proclaiming atheism. What is a God who is not an absolute and sovereign being?

Let us acknowledge with the Scriptures that goodness alone is everlasting, that it alone has had no beginning. It is God himself. It can declare, *I am that I am.* Evil, on the contrary, had a beginning. It existed neither in the Creator, nor in the plan of the creation. It can in no degree be attributed to God, under peril of sapping the very idea of God. It can come only from the creature; and it is here, my brethren, that I ask your entire attention, for the solution of this question contains, in the germ, the solution of all others.

Whatever proceeds from the hands of God is perfect as he is perfect, and bears the signature of divinity. But among the beings created by him there are those of a superior nature; such are the beings made in his image,—spiritual beings. These are not subjected to mechanical laws. It is not with them as with the star, which can not quit the pathway in which the almighty hand has sent it forth, and which is imprisoned in the azure sky by an invincible necessity. Spiritual beings are free beings; they do not gravitate toward God by constraint of a physical law; they are called to turn toward him freely and of themselves. That is to say, in other words, they are called to love him. Love reposes upon freedom. A constrained love is not a genuine love. As well might we say that the earth, turning round the sun, loves the sun. Spiritual beings must therefore determine themselves freely in favor of God, or otherwise they are no longer spiritual beings. But how shall they freely determine themselves thus if the opportunity is not offered? At the moment when they proceed from the hands of God they are in an infantile state. They have not conscious-

ness of that which they owe to him. They are therefore morally unfinished and incomplete. They will have fulfilled their destiny only when by an act of will they shall have consummated the giving up of their being to God. And in order to that, an appeal must needs be made to their will; they must learn to distinguish it from that of God, that they may be able to refer it back to him. A trial of their freedom is needful; they must be required to choose between love and self-seeking,—a perilous choice, a dangerous trial, I admit, but a trial necessary to the full development of the spiritual being: if he comes out of it victorious, then is he consummated in his union with God, without being absorbed by him; if he succumbs, he has only himself to censure. And thus all is to the glory of God. Such is, in our view, the Scriptural solution.

If it be objected, that we greatly exalt the liberty of the creature, we accept the reproach. If this liberty is not earnestly admitted and maintained, we have no understanding either of the gospel or of conscience. We perceive both these revelations lost in the abyss of pantheism. We no longer know the nature of goodness, of evil, or of duty. The alternations of good and evil are regulated as are the alternations of day and night. Astronomy supplants morality, and we can no longer repeat those beautiful words of the hymn:—

Tous les cieux et leur splendeur
Ne valent pas pour ta gloire
Un seul soupir d'un seul cœur.*

* How poor the shining hosts above,
When weighed against one contrite sigh,
To glorify the God of love.

And let no one tell us that we do thus augment human pride. A strange manner of augmenting it, to attribute all evil to the creature, all good to the Creator! Apart from the earnest recognition of freedom, we can not avoid referring evil ultimately to God. It is then his cause which we defend in defending freedom; we are jealous of his rights, which we are sometimes charged with sacrificing. Moreover, this freedom is a gift from him, and in it we are contending for the root of all moral life. We desire to have a heart to give, because we desire to love. Many mysteries still remain, and we do not pretend to explain either foreknowledge or the operation of grace. Over that region of the illimitable we see vast shadows sweeping. But it is not the darkness of a winter's night, the heavy darkness of fatalism. It is a night of summer illumined with celestial irradiations. Divine love shines therein, as the azure depth of heaven in which the stars are glittering, and it is preserved pure and untouched by our faith in freedom, that does not suffer evil to be cast back upon God. Evil must be wholly imputed to the creature who has gone astray.

Do not believe, my brethren, that we have surrendered our minds to suppositions more or less plausible. The facts of revelation are on our side. Of that power of darkness which in our text is personified by the serpent, the Scriptures teach us the glorious origin. He is an archangel fallen; and with regard to him, we may repeat those words of the prophet, "*How art thou fallen, star of the morning!*" The Lord has said of him, "He did not *abide* in the truth." Abide! What does that imply, but that he was once in the truth? We can not

lift the vail which hides from us the history of the angels, but the fall of Satan instructs us that they also have had their trial. They were summoned to decide in favor of God. A portion of them continued in the truth, and attained to the complete development of their being. Others . . . Look at the part played by Satan in the garden of Eden, his impatient eagerness to frustrate the purposes of God, and to destroy his new creature. See the hatred of him whom Jesus Christ calls a murderer and a liar from the beginning; and, remembering that he was formerly one of the seraphs who approached nearest to the throne of the God of love, you will discern the entire extent of his fall, and you will better understand his fearful destiny in reflecting upon the incredible perversity which from such a hight could hurl him so low.

We know now whence comes that power of evil which appears by the side of man in the garden of Eden. We are also in a position to conceive the object of the commandment given him, which imperils his freedom. Created in the image of God, created free, he, like the angels, must have his trial. He is yet a child; he is in a state of innocence. From innocence he must pass into holiness. He is bound to God as the ivy that entwines the oak. A bond of love should take the place of this natural tie. He is called to yield himself to love while having consciousness of that which he does. Do not complain of the danger which he incurs. It is complaining of the means offered to him for the fulfillment of his high destiny. To ask for him the impossibility of falling, is to ask for him the inert nature of the plant. The commandment of God is the trial of his

freedom. Comprehend its importance. In point of fact, God sets before man the most solemn question: "I disclose to thee thy freedom; thou canst choose between my will and thine, between me and thee; between me, who have loaded thee with benefits, and thee, who, from the breath which animates thy dust to thine immortal soul, hast received everything from me. Wilt thou love me?"

To this question you know what was the reply of man. "No," he has said by his acts,—"no, I will not love thee." I will believe the first one who comes, rather than thee. I will believe him although he takes the position of thine enemy. And that which shall be most seductive in his words will be the promise of supplanting thee." Such was the trivial offense of Adam, to use the language of the world!

Does it not seem, my brethren, that all is lost? The solemn, decisive trial is ended: by this rebellion God has been repulsed and offended in the most unworthy manner. Doubtless the wretched being who has dared to plant himself against the Almighty will go, laden with chains of darkness, to consort with rebel angels. Already these felicitate themselves, and begin to have some foretaste of the only joy possible in hell,—the joy of satisfied hate. They err. Love has resources which hatred can not foresee. "Man must never be chastised; he will be banished, he shall die. The just God can not recall his threatening, but at the same time he will pardon. Oh, foolishness! The great God of heaven forget this outrage, raise again the creeping worm who thought to make himself a God, love him once more immediately after

that fatal day of revolt, — to this extent forget his offended dignity!" A foolishness which surpasses the understanding of the wise! Holy and glorious foolishness of infinite charity, which no power can equal! Then began that sacrifice of the Lamb that was slain, according to the gospel, from the foundation of the world. The first manifestation of redeeming love is in the very contest which arose between the power of goodness and the power of perdition. Man deserved to be abandoned to himself and to death, and to be wholly given up to the angel of darkness whom he had preferred before God. If there is a contest, it is, then, because there has occurred a miraculous and benevolent interposition on the part of the power of love. It could not be otherwise manifested, for it can not set aside the rights of divine justice. A reparation is needed. This reparation must be obtained from humanity itself. It must be led to labor for this; and, as it has let loose in its own heart and upon the earth the powers of darkness, this result can be achieved only at the cost of a most stubborn conflict. But the very existence of such a contest is the manifestation of the forgiveness of God. It could not be conceived of as possible in the abode of a remediless condemnation. There could exist only the withering uniformity of evil, and the frightful immobility of despair.

Recognize, then, first of all, the love of God in that succession of the generations of man, in that tumultuous movement of history, in those conflicts of ideas and sentiments which ever conceal the great conflict of good and evil, of error and of truth, and say to

yourself that a world of combat is a world not forsaken by the God of love. Recognize in the rendings of your hearts, and in the battles of your thoughts, the presence of the pitying power. The simple fact alone of this contest brought before us by our text ought to make you bless the God of love.

But there is more than this: not only is the contest announced, the issue is also declared: *The seed of the woman shall crush thy head*, was said to the serpent. It is not possible that the power of evil should prevail over the power of goodness. Love is more indefatigable than hate. It does not grow weary: it seeks never its own gratification; the more unfortunate and destitute its object, the more shiningly displayed are its boundless compassions. Do not fear, then, that the pitying power should yield the ground to the malevolent power; in proportion as earth shall become more and more a scene of sorrow, in that proportion shall love be there manifested. Let us not forget that it is God who speaks. It is he who by a word created the world, and whose breath sustains universal life. It is, in especial, he who made the heart of man, who knows all its springs, and who has preserved for himself a witness in the depth of the soul. It is the omnipotent Father, who holds in his hand all the fibers of our moral being, in order to draw us to himself. Moreover, he has promised it. This promise was the worst chastisement of the tempter. He pronounced it on the first day of history; he repeated it by the mouth of his Son, when a second phase of history was inaugurated by the Son in declaring that the gates of hell should not

prevail against his church. Thus we march on beneath the blessing of a promise of victory. Let us never forget this. The worst device of the enemy consists in depriving us of this recollection. Take heed lest by your unbelief you ascribe falsehood to God. The power of evil fortifies itself with all the strength which you impute to it. He uses this to beat down your shaken soul. Never give him the satisfaction of believing in the possibility of his triumph. When it seems to you that he has completely conquered in society; when truth and justice appear to you stifled by error, hypocrisy, and injustice; when your moral sense is sadly wounded by the success of evil and its insolent joy, — in the name of the promise of those primeval days, falter not in your confidence in goodness and in righteousness, doubt not of the victory. When religious society or the church seems to you ready to founder; when superstition, heresy, and materialism — that subtle venom of the serpent — have perverted the holy gospel of God; when the difficulties opposing a renovation appear to you insurmountable, — in the name of the promise of the first days, believe in the blessed renewal, in the salutary purification; doubt not of the victory. And, finally, when in your individual life, assailed by temptation, encompassed with snares, almost fascinated by the seductions of a corrupting world, you imagine to yourselves that you are about to yield, and you cry out, "The combat is too hard, the temptation is too strong," resume your courage, in the name of the promise of the first days. Rely upon Him who promised to fight for you. Doubt not of the victory. Never

was it more necessary in these sad days to draw out from this first promise consolation and hope. It is destined to be for us, during our long journey in the desert, that which the luminous cloud was for Israel. Let it enlighten to-day our somber pathway. There is no dark epoch which it has not enlightened. Did it not light up even the entrance of man into the valley of trial? When did the head of the serpent rise up more victorious, apparently, than on that day when, through his seductive art, sinful man fled from his God amid the trees of the garden? And yet then it was said that his head should be crushed! Let the consolation which sufficed for that day — the saddest of days — suffice unto us in our time.

Our text discloses to us not only the great conflict between good and evil, and its result; it teaches us, also, what is the principal weapon employed in the combat. A strange thing, — the weapon is the same on both sides! It is wielded with directly opposite purposes, but it is in the hands of the two adversaries. This weapon is *suffering*. God said to the serpent, "Thou shalt wound the heel of the son of the woman." This figure indicates the numberless sorrows which are the result of the condemnation, — sorrows which, through the grace of God, are not a mortal wound for our souls, as is signified by the expression of a wound in the heel. They appeared to be a signal proof of the triumph of Satan. And it has proved that those afflictions — I speak of afflictions in general, and not merely of those endured by the servants of God — have concurred in the most effectual manner to secure the triumph of divine love, and to prepare

for its supreme manifestation in Jesus Christ. Outward happiness in sin leads to hardening. Suffering breaks the heart. On the one hand, doubtless, it subserves the justice of God, but not the less is his love served by it. Moreover, the attributes of God form a living unity. Love can not be severed from justice any more than justice from love. Rejoice not, therefore, O Satan, because man is driven from Eden. Nothing would have better aided thy black projects than the possession of that delicious abode after the Fall. Then thou couldst have counted upon success. But now, exile and its bitterness will soften his pride. Soon sighing and complaining will banish blasphemy from his withered lips. It is not, therefore, thy accursed angels which guard the entrance of the earthly paradise; it is the seraphs of the God of love, and their sword recalls the fact that there exists a consuming fire. If the earth is covered with briars and thorns, it is not merely because it is the earth of condemnation, but also because it is the earth of preparation and of salutary trial. Every time that man shall eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, his sad destiny will be brought to his mind, and the hour will come when in thy despite all these sorrows and all these accumulated labors will impel him to cry unto God in his distress. Wound him only; thou shalt do no more than urge him to flee more swiftly toward the Redeemer. Thou didst believe the victory thine when his tears were seen to flow, and, behold! thy powerful adversary, whose first word was, "Blessed are they that weep; they shall be comforted."

How this contemplation of affliction is adapted to strengthen us! In every sorrow, righteousness and pity embrace each other. Let us learn to discern therein the hand of righteousness, which smites us for our rebellions, as the hand of love, which, while smiting us, knocks at the door of our hearts. Who would not draw resignation from the certainty that affliction is eminently the weapon wielded by the power of love? Who would not suffer himself to be pierced by that blessed sword which inflicts mortal blows only on the power of perdition? Whenever we feel its piercing point, let us believe that we were about to yield to the attack of our adversary, and that the restorative stroke prevented us from experiencing a repulse that might have proved fatal. Yes, it is affliction which at every moment of our spiritual life has caused the power of salvation to prevail within us over the power of perdition. It is this which has detached us from the vanities of time, which has awakened us from our moral sleep, and which has made us say, "My soul thirsteth for God." It is this which has made our souls know the droughts of summer, of which the prophet speaks; it is this which has broken our bones, which has placed us in the dust of death, and which has prepared us to utter the cry, "Lord, save us; we perish." Mysterious messenger sent to the prodigal son, it has brought him back to the Father, bowed down, his garments rent and stained. And at the hour when we found the Father, affliction, spiritualized, ennobled, transformed into sorrow for sin, caused tears of repentance to flow from our eyes. It preceded and guided our restoration. From the day of our reconciliation, trial, like the

angel of God that buffeted St. Paul, has been our guardian angel ; that austere companion of our journey will leave us only on the threshold of that city above, where there are no more tears, because there is no more sin. Thus our individual experience comes to sustain the general truth which we have established. The sorrowful wound precedes, accompanies, and perfects the work of salvation.

It is time to turn to that work itself, without which all that we have said is devoid of meaning. And here we touch upon the most elevated part of our theme. How was this work accomplished? By the greatest of sufferings ; it could not be otherwise. Satan is not content with the afflictions which are the natural result of sin. With his murderous blows he follows after all the men of God. In running over the religious history of humanity, we shall perceive that if the adversary seeks to hold his own followers by means of terrestrial joys, he strives at the same time to enfeeble and overcome the sons of God by persecution. He has always grossly deceived himself ; that weapon has turned against him, for affliction has constantly elevated and illustrated the cause of God. The wicked has fallen into the snare which he had prepared. But never was he more foiled in his attempt than when he violently assailed him who was, by eminence, the man of God. He wounded him in the heel with his sharpest arrows. Against him he brought to bear all afflictions that can be imagined. And that wounded heel proved to be precisely that which crushed his head. See, then, suffering truly victorious and health-giving. The sufferings of which we have spoken would possess

no utility without the suffering of the Redeemer. They have no expiatory value, because they are more or less stained, as is everything which proceeds from man. All the tears that have bedewed the earth, all the blood which has been shed, all general and special afflictions, — more in number than the sands of the sea, — can not blot out one of the sins committed by the descendants of Adam. God does not thirst for our tears. That which he desires is our hearts. The heart of man was torn from him; it is necessary that it be brought back to him. It was torn from him by an act of rebellion; it must be restored to him by an act of obedience. That act of obedience can be no other than a bloody sacrifice. For now the question is not concerning the accepting of the will of God under the blessed conditions of Eden; it must be accepted under the deplorable conditions of the condemnation; that is to say, all its consequences must be accepted, freely accepted, without having been deserved. There must be obedience unto death, since death is the destiny of the sons of Adam. Suffering is therefore the indispensable condition of salvation. Without the shedding of blood, no salvation. That shedding of blood has taken place; salvation has been effected; our sufferings, then, have a blessed operation in preparing us to desire it and to receive it.

But what is in reality that posterity of the woman which is destined to fulfill the promise? Let us read our text again; it answers this question also: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.* The contest, as we have said, is between the power of perdition and the power of

love, between Satan and God. But these two powers do not altogether engage in a direct conflict with each other. Each has its champions. The seed of the serpent fights against the seed of God. Both are to be sought for among the children of Adam. Humanity is divided into two humanities; the one is in such wise assimilated to itself by the power of darkness, that it is called the *seed* of the serpent; the other is in such wise assimilated to itself by the power of divine love as to become its incarnation. It can not be otherwise. Man as a free creature could not be the price of a combat in which he had not taken part. Satan can not triumph over man except through man; all the legions of fallen angels do not equal for him a single man enrolled beneath his standard. Nor can the work of salvation, any more than the triumph of Satan, be accomplished apart from our concurrence. It was humanity that abandoned God. It must return to him, it must offer the restorative sacrifice. Doubtless it can not do this of itself, for it is sold under sin, and is the slave of sin. Therefore, when God promises that the posterity of the woman shall crush the serpent's head, he thereby engages to intervene with sovereign power in the work of our salvation; he promises the assimilation of humanity by himself; and be pleased to observe that I am not speaking of a mere moral assimilation, I speak of a positive assimilation, and I know no other than the incarnation of the Son. But it is not the less true that the Son must be truly a man, not only as to the flesh which he borrows from humanity, but also by a moral bond which is linked in with it. He is to be the representative of humanity,

and for that cause he must be desired by it, by that portion, at least, which is not dedicated to the service of Satan. He is to become not only the fruit of her womb, but also the fruit of her broken heart. If Jesus Christ was marvelously begotten of a woman, he was not less miraculously begotten in the soul of humanity. The desire of a Saviour which it experienced was a seed of God.

This divine seed was deposited in the heart of all the saints who prepared the way for his coming. Gradually the power of love did thus assimilate humanity to itself, and the men who took part in this blessed preparation were from the beginning of the world designated by the name of "sons of God:" they represent the divine seed. The full development of this seed was not witnessed on the first day. Four thousand years of conflict were necessary, because there was a constant and hostile development of the seed of the serpent,—that is to say, of satanic humanity,—which sought incessantly to stifle the divine seed. It would be ungrateful to overlook those contests, the labor of so many centuries in preparing the cradle of Jesus Christ. There needed to have been many sons of God like those spoken of in Genesis, before the only Son of God should be born,—he in whom dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily,—before it could be said, *Unto us a child is born;* the child of the Most High God, and the child of our prayers, our tears, and our desires, the divine seed deposited in us by his Spirit!

It is this preparation, this slow introduction into the world of the posterity of the woman, which we would invite you to contemplate whilst we sketch its history

in its great outlines. Such will be the object of the discussion upon which we have entered. We shall see the conflict between the two powers, of which we spoke at the beginning, gathering a new degree of energy. It is no longer merely a contest between good and evil; the combat bears upon the coming of the Saviour; the seed of Satan strives to stifle in its blessed germ the salvation of the race of man. The posterity of the woman preserves it, and develops it under the operation of the Spirit of God until the day when, having reached its maturity, through the incarnation, the triumph of the power of love is consummated. We shall see the power of perdition following a parallel development, and, on the day of God's complete assimilation of humanity, assimilating to itself more fully rebellious humanity, to such an extent that Satan appears to be personally and directly taking part in the contest. Thus in very truth has our text given us the theme which history has only developed. The great and universal conflict is indicated in these words: *I will put enmity between thy seed and the seed of the woman.* The final triumph shines out from the first: *The posterity of the woman shall crush thy head.* The conditions of this triumph are summed up in the words, *Thou shalt wound his heel.* In suffering he prepares himself. In a great sacrifice he completes the work. The champions in this conflict are on both sides men. God in humanity, imparting himself wholly unto it in the person of his Son,—the divine posterity of the woman,—shall crush Satan, who is also present in humanity. Such is the majestic plan which is unrolled before us in the text. May I have succeeded in

filling you with the admiration which it has awakened within me!

But it is not admiration of God's plan that I particularly ask for at the close of this discourse. I desire to leave you under a more serious impression. Have you remarked the opposition established in our text between the seed of the serpent and the posterity of the woman? Apparently, it aims to declare that those who serve the serpent do not really continue to form a part of humanity. The true humanity — the posterity of the woman — is the divine humanity, that which fights on the side of God. It alone, first, responds to the true idea of humanity, such as it exists in the thought of the Creator. Moreover, it alone promotes the interests of the fallen race. You who have joined yourselves to man's enemy and murderer, you who act as his accomplices in order to complete the ruin of the race, are justly denied by humanity. You are not the posterity of the woman; you are the seed of the serpent. You seem to espouse man's cause with ardor; you have always his name on your lips; you speak to him of his dignity, his greatness, and also, at times, of his divinity. Such was the language of the serpent on the day of the Fall. Flatterers of human pride, from him you borrow his poisonous words. I know no condemnation of you more severe than the simple words of my text, which show you so far assimilated to the power of perdition that you are no longer members of humanity, but the seed of the serpent. The true humanity, the true seed of the woman, we find in those who speak rather of fall than of greatness, rather of our wretchedness than of our dignity. They hold a

language opposed to that of the serpent; they are the posterity of the woman because they are the children of God, and since, as the apostle has said, humanity is in its essence the offspring of God. The nearer it is brought to God by humility, the more completely is it allowed to realize its high destinies. You, then, who have imagined you could serve it without the pale of the religion of the humble, undeceive yourselves. You have fought against its higher interests. You have served the power of perdition. Remember that you are not envassaled to it by nature, that one movement of faith and humility suffices to transfer you into the camp of God. What wretchedness for you if, with generous ideas, and a sincere desire to cause the happiness of your fellows, it should prove at last that you had lent assistance to their greatest enemy! He is not only a murderer, he is a liar. He has taken you, perhaps, on the side of your noble impulses. Ah! while it is yet time, in the name of the well-being of your brothers, in the name of your salvation, take sides with God in this great and solemn contest. It is taking man's side. Their two causes are one. How should not the interests of eternal love be those of fallen man? We all, whoever we may be, are also taking sides. God's word shows us but two camps. There is no intermediate position. We must be in very truth a seed of the serpent, or in very truth labor to crush his head with the posterity of the woman. Christians, you do not hesitate; you have already chosen your chief. But consider well that to sustain this formidable conflict, all your strength and all your time are not too much. Take all which you have, and throw it into the current

of good. Should you bring thither but your drop of water, you would not be useless; dread above all to swell by a single word, by a single act, the current of evil which is rolling its waters by our side. Enough of others are laboring to increase the wretchedness of humanity. Do you labor for its salvation, ever mindful not to aid the old serpent in his work of death, and ever relying upon Him who has already gloriously fulfilled the promise given to Adam, and who is ready to fulfill it anew for each one of us.

CHAPTER II.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

BEFORE JUDAISM.

"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." — Gen. xii. 3.

WE have already seen that the contest everywhere waged and maintained upon the earth, in the outer as in the inner world, is at bottom the great combat between the power of love and the power of darkness. We know in advance, that God's triumph is secured at the cost of inexpressible sufferings. It will be the more decisive from having been the more disputed. We know, also, that it will be gained by humanity, but by humanity fully assimilated to God; in other words, by the God-man, *the blessed seed of the woman*, crushing the head of the serpent. To-day I have to set before you the preparatory work by which that great victory of the power of love was slowly won. Our text recalls to our minds its most characteristic feature. To Abraham it was said that all the families

of the earth should be blessed in his posterity. In these words the election by God of a peculiar people is recorded. But this election is the most important fact in the preparatory period. Perhaps you find a certain difficulty in understanding how the promise made to Abraham is reconciled with the promise to Adam. Is there not here a restriction of the promise given in Eden? The latter spoke of the posterity of the woman, and now there is reference made only to the seed of Abraham. How reconcile these two sayings which are alike pronounced by God? We shall have to resolve this difficult and important question. We will show you that the second promise contributes to the fulfillment of the first, and that the election of a people of God was an effectual means of preparing for the coming of the Saviour. The old covenant has no other end than to hasten the full accomplishment of the plan of salvation. It is destined to prepare humanity for that by its successive revelations. This view is the only key to the Old Testament. How often has it not been a stone of stumbling for men who accepted joyfully the gospel revelation! Whence came their astonishment, which was accompanied with more or less of scandal? From the differences which they indicated between the two Testaments. But are not such differences perfectly natural and comprehensible, as soon as it is admitted that the Old Testament speaks to us of the preparation for salvation, whilst the New Testament speaks of its realization? There is no occasion for surprise if the first rounds of the ladder which binds earth anew to heaven are nearer to the earth than the upper rounds which reach forth into the light of heaven itself. Are

they not admirably suited to the weakness of the human creature? To complain of finding less spirituality in the Old Testament than in the New, in the first pages of the Bible than in the last, is to complain that our heavenly Father has spoken in an intelligible manner to man in the childhood of the race. When we take as our vantage ground of observation the work preparatory to salvation, we perceive that the education of the race, like that of the individual, has been progressive, and that God's revelations are not to be regarded in the gross, but in their succession and their connection. There has been a development, a history of revelation. The form, though sometimes strange, in which its teachings are clothed, instead of offending us, ought to touch us as we are touched by the sight of a father who stoops in order to raise up to himself his new-born child.

This point of view regarding the Old Testament imparts to it the most beautiful and the richest unity. Jesus Christ is the substance of every recital, of every page. He is the point toward which all things aspire. There is not one institution which does not tend toward him. As expressed in his own words, it is his day which rises, at first almost imperceptibly, like the white light of early dawn, then shining more and more. He who knows not that the day is beginning to break in those few rays, gives them no earnest heed; but what admiration fills the heart of him who from the first pages of the holy Book looks upon the rising of the day-star from on high! If, in the reflections which we are about to present you, we could contribute to lift the vail that hides Moses, not only from the

Jews, but also from a great number of Christians, we should believe ourselves to be laboring profitably for your edification, and for the glory of our God.

In what should the work of preparation consist? Let us clear up this point before every other; it is our only method of comprehending the object and the scope of the election of a special people. We have already perceived that the Saviour was to be not only the Son of God, but also the son of man; that he was to represent God to humanity, and humanity to God. By this is not merely meant that he was to assume a body resembling ours. It was needful that, being the Son of God Most Holy, he should be morally the son of man. In what sense must these words be taken? Is humanity to be summoned to produce a Saviour by its own strength? No, my brethren; and herein lies the great error of human religions and philosophies. To produce the Saviour, that is to say, to save one's self; to save one's self by unfolding the faculties of man,—such is the pretension of pride. It is an impious and foolish pretension, which consists in seeking salvation in perdition itself, and in applying for the remedy to the poison which must be subdued. We declare most earnestly that, abandoned to his own resources, man can produce nothing. We are in error; the apostle James teaches us what he derives from himself: "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James i. 15. Death,—death in all its senses,—such is the product which humanity, surrendered to itself, draws from within, since the Fall. The question, then, is not for it to produce the Saviour. The Saviour can only be a free gift of

God. The promise could be accomplished only by Him who made it. But we must not fall into the opposite extreme from that which we have just combated. And it would be falling into this error to bring down the Saviour suddenly from heaven, and to transform the greatest of all events into an abrupt incident, having no connection with that which precedes; it would be falling into this error not to admit the human filiation of Him who was called "the seed of the woman." We know to what this filiation is reducible. To affirm that man is incapable of producing the Saviour is to affirm that he has no creative part in the bringing forth of the woman's divine posterity; he has only to receive the gift of God. It is the Creator's part to give, and this part his free love has led him willingly to choose. He is, as the apostle has said, the author of every gift; it is the creature's part to receive. The Creator gives, the creature receives his gifts; such is the normal order. That which is true with regard to the different gifts of divine love is true with respect to its supreme gift, — the gift of a Saviour. Humanity has only to receive the Saviour, but it is necessary that humanity do in fact receive him.

God has eternally begotten his Son; but in order that the Eternal Son become the posterity of the woman, — the son of humanity, — it was needful that God should find in it the dispositions requisite in order to its assimilation of the celestial gift, — the divine seed. The miraculous conception of Jesus Christ is for us the most positive of realities. We take good heed not to convert into symbols the facts of the gospel history; yet it is not the less true that the great fact of which

we are speaking is also a sublime type. It represents to us, in their reciprocal relations, God's part and man's part with respect to the coming of our Saviour,—God who gives, humanity that receives, that assimilates. The outward miracle discloses an inward miracle; and this latter has cost more, if we may dare to speak thus, than the former. It needed but a fleeting moment for the conception of Jesus Christ in the womb of the virgin; it needed four thousand years for the soul of man to be formed by the virtue of the same Spirit to receive the Saviour. The material world is a thousand times more rapidly transformed than the spiritual world, because the will is not changed like matter, but must be persuaded and won over. It would be impoverishing the work of our salvation absolutely to isolate the work of the incarnation. Without the incarnation, the preparatory work would be useless; but, also, without the preparatory work the incarnation would be only an outward fact, a miracle in space. The proof of this is in the postponement of the birth of Jesus Christ. The hour for the external miracle struck in the heart of man.

To whom shall this double miracle be attributed? To whom, if not to God? God not only gives the Saviour, but he gives the receptivity; not only is he the author of every gift, but, further, he purifies, he develops the human soul; without ever annihilating its liberty, he inclines it toward himself. We may, therefore, repeat, with the apostle, addressing humanity, "What hast thou which thou hast not received? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast thyself thereof?" And when I speak of humanity, you are not to for-

get that we have distinguished two humanities,—a satanic humanity, which became willingly the seed of the serpent, and the humanity conformed unto God, which responds to his love. This latter is always the minority. Sometimes it is reduced to one family, to a few chosen persons. It matters little. It is the humanity conformed to God, that which accomplishes his plans, and from it, in every sense, shall be born the Saviour.

We are now in a position to determine with accuracy the nature of the preparatory work. On God's part, it consisted in developing within man such dispositions as were favorable for the reception of his gifts, and, above all, the greatest of his gifts, the Saviour of the world. If you ask what are the dispositions which it is important to develop, I shall appeal to your experience. When are you most inclined to accept a gift of whatever kind? Is it not when you have desired it previously? If you do not desire it, you either receive it with indifference, or you refuse it. But if you have long sighed after this or that good, if the expectation has inflamed your desire, when this good is offered to you, with what ardor do you then seize it, with what joy do you gain possession of it! Thus, then, humanity will be prepared to receive the Saviour according to the degree in which the desire for the Saviour has been enkindled in the heart. If it desires the Saviour but feebly, or at least only in a vague and general manner, it will not be inclined to appropriate him to itself. He would remain a stranger to it; he would be as if external to it, should he appear during the period when desire languishes. When the desire shall be at once more precise and more lively, humanity will be better

disposed to seize, to embrace the Saviour as its treasure, and to become incorporated with him. But when this desire shall have reached its full intensity, when humanity shall feel that it can no longer do without the Saviour, when she shall call upon him with all her voices, and with all her tears, then, if he appears, she will cry out: "*By this do I know him: he is flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone*," the soul of my soul. Humanity will closely unite herself to him. He will be hers, as she will be his. He will be truly the son of man; consequently, to enkindle, to cherish, and to develop this holy desire for the Saviour, comprehends the entire work of divine preparation.

But let us enter further into this thought, which is the fundamental thought of this discourse, and which seems to us to throw a vivid light upon the Old Testament. The more closely we shall consider it, the more luminous will it appear to our minds. Since the work of preparation consists in developing the faculty receptive of the gifts of God,—that is to say, the desire for salvation,—what is the best method of developing this desire? I appeal to you, brethren, for I do not wish to lose myself in vain reasonings. I wish to found everything upon experience. In each one of our desires, whatever be the particular object to which it is directed, I discover two sentiments: first, a feeling of want, of suffering. We desire a good because we feel that it is wanting to us, that it is wanting to our happiness; if we had all that is needful to us, if our felicity were absolute, it is evident that we should have no desires to form. Every desire is accompanied with a sigh. Furthermore, a degree of hope is mingled with this. If

we had not the thought that the desired good could be accorded to us, our desires would be stifled in the germ, or, rather, they would return upon us, finding nothing to devour but our own hearts. Desires not sustained by the breath of hope fall back to the earth. An impossible desire ought not to be called desire, but despair. Thus the sting of suffering awakens desire, the wing of hope bears it up. Suffering and hope are the two elements fused together in each one of our desires. We shall recognize them both in the desire for a Saviour. Man will call upon the great Deliverer only when he shall have bitterly felt the emptiness of a life without God. He will not lift his eyes toward heaven until he have the hope of seeing one day the heavens opening to give a Redeemer to the earth. To say that God wishes to develop the desire for salvation in humanity, is to say that he wishes to develop both this great sorrow on account of condemnation and this great hope of deliverance. You will see all the revelations of the old covenant tending to this twofold consummation; with one hand God smites the rebellious race, he smites it with redoubled and fearful strokes; and with the other hand he lifts it up, to point out the end to which it is approaching, yet only by repeated falls and repeated humiliations. Each new phase of revelation is signalized by a new and more resonant blow from the rod of condemnation, and by a more radiant gleam over the promised future. The last phase will exhibit to us the humiliation of humanity carried to the extremity of shame, and to the most terrible punishments, and the soaring, also, of a universal and magnificent hope. And if so many phases succeed one

another, if so many generations appear before the coming of the blessed generation to which the Saviour shall belong, be not surprised. God is not alone in working. The enemy works against him, scattering tares in the field where the good seed is scarcely sown. The enemy is at work with the aid of a multitude of men who have gone astray. To every new manifestation of celestial love there is a corresponding exhibition of hellish hate. Hence that seemingly interminable succession of revelations supplementing those that have gone before. Every time that Satan and his servants strive to overthrow God's plan, that plan enlarges, and some new wonder comes forth from its treasures. Far from being scandalized on account of the numberless ages preceding the coming of Jesus Christ, praise the loving kindness of your God; acknowledge the unwearied goodness which he has shown in your own case, in waiting for you during so many years, notwithstand- your revolt and your disdain. Do not complain that we are detaining you on the threshold of the gospel history, whilst we unfold to you the preparatory work. God, the great God of heaven, remained there himself for more than forty centuries, knocking at the door of man's heart. That slowness which you blame is perhaps the slowness of his wrath to burst forth upon you. O patience of my God, thou are not the least wonderful, the least touching of his compassions!

Let us now trace the picture of the work of preparation in its great outlines. That work is twofold. God developed the desire of salvation by events, and by revelations which he granted to those who promoted his designs. We have to show how these events and these

revelations have gradually augmented the sorrow for condemnation and the hope of deliverance, up to the time when these two feelings became blended together in the positive expectation of the Saviour. To-day we shall occupy ourselves with only the first phases of revelation.

Let us begin by considering the situation of man after he had received the promise of pardon. You will admit with us that here God's plan received a first fulfillment. And as the essential traits of this situation are found again to-day in every human life, you will have occasion to bless in your own name the compassionate hand of the Lord for those general dispensations of his love, common to all men, which too often escape our attention.

Behold this divine love, above all, in the abode of fallen man. We may say of the outward world what the Psalmist said of the starry sky: there is no speech and no language in it, and yet its voice is heard. That voice brings to us a word of condemnation and a promise of pardon; gathered up by the faithful heart, it forms within it a sigh of longing for Christ. Oh! I know well that it is only too seldom heard; I know well that when surrendered to its inspiration, man forces nature to speak in accordance with his corruption, that he seeks at her hands a guilty intoxication, and that he willingly suffers himself to be fascinated by her. Nothing is more dangerous than this soft contemplation of the outward world, which enervates the soul and bears it out of itself.

There are two methods of converting into poison the noble enjoyment of nature. The first is to allow

one's self to be dominated by her, to lose one's self in nature; this is the pantheist's admiration of nature. He deifies and adores nature; this is stark idolatry, which tears us away from ourselves. There is another manner of loving nature, which, though directly opposite, is not less perfidious; it is a self-seeking admiration. In nature the individual seeks a mirror of his own sad or joyous sentiments. It is regarded as a vast lyre destined to give back the slightest shades of his feelings. It is belittled in order to play this paltry part, and men ask from it the refined delights of a sickly egotism. In the literature of our day you find constantly this double wrong which separates man from God. Thus man renders nature his accomplice in the work of his own perdition. Need we say that this is not the part which God assigned it? When we derive evil impressions from nature, we turn against us a grace of God. God speaks through nature; he says to us by her numberless voices, "Thou hast need of a Saviour; he is not afar off." Nature is a witness that deposes in favor of the truth. We have not the right to deprive ourselves of her testimony. Given beneath every sky, but also constantly perverted by the folly of man, it is very important that we should penetrate its true and divine import.

Do not fear lest we give ourselves the easy satisfaction of accumulating poetical descriptions. A poetical interest is not involved; the question concerns truth and salvation. What did the first man, when driven from Eden, perceive in the outward world? He saw there as if a confirmation of his

own destiny; he could read it in the vast book of nature. His destiny was twofold; the curse weighed upon him, lightened by the promise of pardon. Was not the curse inscribed around him in the transformation of the earth, upturned, made desolate, become niggardly in grain, and fruitful in thorns? Did he not behold it sadly fulfilled in that power of destruction which made trial of itself upon animals before assailing him? Did he not hear it thunder with the tempest in the air? Did not all the frightful spectacles which the earth contains cry out to him with one voice, "Thou art condemned, thou hast sinned"? And, on the other hand, the sovereign beauty that remains upon our poor earth, the harmony, the grandeur, those marvelous days which each year holds in reserve, the enchanting sites, sublime or graceful, — all these recollections of the ancient earth, did they not speak to him of divine love? Do they not to-day still say to man, "Fear not, poor fallen creature; thou art not forsaken; there is hope"?

Thou hast sinned; nevertheless, hope. These are the two words which are heard above the vast groaning of nature. But these two words are two echoes of revelation. Let no one tell us, then, that nature is deistical, and speaks only of the Creator. She speaks, also, of the Saviour. For that reason has he borrowed from her so many parables and teachings. All creatures, says the apostle, groan until now, waiting for the deliverance of the children of God. This longing, this desire for salvation, exists in unintelligent nature only in order, through her, to gain entrance to our hearts; therefore nature also concurs in the

great work of preparation, the entire scope and aim of which is to develop the desire for salvation in man. Let him not remain deaf to this universal sighing; and may he discern in the very aspect of the earth an invitation to turn himself unto God the Saviour! Thus will he find the blessing there, even where he had encountered temptation alone.

If the outward world speaks to man of sin and of forgiveness, much more does his whole being speak of it. In the external world of humanity there are two facts which convey to us the twofold utterance which we have heard from the voice of nature. The first of these facts is death. What a preacher of the righteousness of God! How its fearful eloquence is suited to impress us with our condemnation! It is ever traversing our streets and our dwellings, repeating anew the first sentence over the inanimate remains of our neighbors, giving the most striking denial to all the lies of the tempter; and yet, in the presence of such crushing evidence, we yield to the suggestions of the spirit of pride. Yes, to-day, even, there are men who wish to be as gods, and allow themselves to be taken by the same words which seduced the first man. We can conceive the possibility of illusion before death came; but to believe to-day that one can succeed in this impious attempt at equality with God, is madness. Man equal with God! But hast not thou seen thy pretended god, such as death has made him to be for thee? Hast thou not seen him motionless, at first speechless, then dust and ashes, the image of helplessness and of corruption? Who of you has not beheld this doleful spectacle of

the annihilation of all the hopes of human pride? To us Christians, death appears only softened and adorned. Through Jesus Christ, death possesses something of an angelic character; but let us not forget what it was at the first. Let us not cease to see in it the greatest of humiliations, the reply of the Creator to the creature's insolent defiance. Let it remain the king of terrors for whoever is not in Christ. Let us protest against this tendency of human philosophy which places its reasonings at the service of worldly frivolity, and which sees in death a natural fact to which the race must become accustomed. Let us say boldly, it is a fearful thing against nature, that the immortal creature should be obliged to die; that it is a subversion of his destiny. Let death in this manner unroll before our eyes the condemnation in all its results, and let it cause us to go back to the sin of which it was begotten. Then it will fulfill its mission, and lead us, through sorrow and fear, to seek for deliverance.

This word of love and hope, by whom shall it be brought to us, my brethren? for we have need of it. The feeling of condemnation ought to be tempered by a gentle hope. The word of love sounds forth with the first cry of every new-born babe. What does that teach us, if not that humanity is not a race irrevocably devoted to the power of death and destruction? If the condemnation were absolute, it is evident that there would not be a succession of generations upon the accursed earth. Can we imagine the God of love multiplying beings devoted in advance to perdition, and coming out of non-existence only to enter into hell? Will there

be births in the realm of the second death? Have demons a posterity? From the fact that God permits the multiplication of the human family, we may conclude that he wishes to save it, that he wishes to employ it in this merciful work. Thus every new-born child is a witness of his love. Before Christ came he brought to mind the promise of the divine child who was to be born for the deliverance of humanity. Since the coming of Jesus Christ, he recalls the fulfillment of the great prophecy. We can take in this sense, also, those words of Scripture, "Out of the mouth of sucklings thou hast perfected praise;" thou seemest to say to us, through them, "The child is born to you." They take us back to the manger of Bethlehem, to the humble entrance of the eternal Son into our poor world.

To this word of condemnation and of love which has sounded out for our souls in the two most striking facts of man's outward life,— birth and death,— you could be invited to listen in all the circumstances of his life, in that blending of joys and sorrows, of good and evil things, of toils and triumphs, which form its universal fabric. But we hasten to bid you hear it in his higher life. There contrasts abound. Beneath the marks of corruption are found the traces of man's lofty origin. To the movements of egotism succeeds rapidly some generous impulse. To-day his heart appears buried in the dust of this world; to-morrow he will be tormented with a thirst for the infinite. This is because his moral condition, subsequently to the Fall, is not a simple condition. Sin has changed all, has laid waste everything in him, but has not absolutely destroyed his primeval nature. This doctrine is conformable to the teaching

of Scripture. The apostle plainly confesses that fallen humanity is of divine origin. Acts 17 : 29. Let us hasten to say that the substance of the soul of man is not on this account less corrupt, that he can offer to God no acceptable work, and that of himself he has no hope of salvation. Let us add that if the lamp, almost extinguished, still smokes, if the bruised reed is not entirely broken, this should be attributed to the grace of God, to that sovereign grace which on the day of the Fall began its work of restoration. The idea that after the first sin man retains no longer any vestige of his origin, that he is not only dead in his sins in the sense that he has no part in salvation before his conversion, but also in the sense that he lies in an absolute moral insensibility, and is totally hardened, deaf as a stone to the voice of God, — this idea is based neither on the Bible nor on experience. It limits the work of salvation by comprehending it within a moment, by denying the operation of the preparatory grace which works upon the heart of every man. It makes of this a mechanical and external act. It renders every appeal to conscience useless. If we believe it, we are doing nothing earnest or useful in entreating the sinner to be converted. Far from striking down his pride, it gives him fresh confidence by depriving him of all responsibleness for his unbelief. On the day when we should adopt such an opinion, my brethren, we frankly avow that we should leave this pulpit for ever, preaching having become a superfluous thing in the church. And have the kindness to remark that we blot out from Holy Scripture no one of the stern sayings by which it paints our condition. Yes,

we affirm with the Word, that there is no just man, not even one; that we have drunk iniquity like water; that the ox knoweth his master's crib, and we have forgotten our God; that from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there is no soundness in man.

To those who regard this picture as overcharged, we say, Open your eyes and see; look round about you, contemplate all the shames, all the outrages, all the cowardly acts, all the defilements of the poor race of man,—shames and defilements such that it would be already committing a sin to depict them. Consider your own selves: recollect that with which you alone are acquainted; each one of you has his mysteries of iniquity. In order to convince you of your debasement, I need not your worst actions; your good acts suffice. You know what their motive has been the greater part of the time, and how largely, whilst men were applauding you, you were at bottom self-seeking and self-interested. I do not even need your acts; I appeal to the secret of your hearts and of your thoughts. Not one of you would consent that this latter basis of your being should be disclosed to the light of day. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, have penetrated your inner life, and have poisoned it. Such is the dark side of your inner life. With respect to the other side, we can not call it luminous: it is too much commingled with sin. But, nevertheless, is it not true that there exist in you aspirations toward something better than this fleeting life, the need of truth and of peace, and also, at certain moments, a longing for God, a sighing after God, or at least a mysterious sadness, without appreciable cause? Are there

not other chords besides that of self-interest vibrating in you? If these are relaxed through your fault, have you not admired in other men acts of spontaneous devotement, which were in their lives like a lightning flash from heaven? What mean these contrasts? You have a voice of God within you which explains them, — the voice of that conscience which is one of the strongest evidences that man, although fallen, is not absolutely hardened. What is declared by conscience, unless it be our fall? "Be silent," it says to your reasoning thought, when it desires to deny the Fall, — "be silent. Call to mind what thou art; not the self which is paraded before others, but thy true self, thy inner self. Thou art under the stroke of condemnation; thou knowest it well. Thou tremblest for this when thou art alone with me." Conscience has also more consoling words. By it we are driven toward God, and that hope of salvation is given us which has everywhere impelled humanity to seek him. Thus this contrast, this disharmony in the higher life of man, brings to us the word of condemnation and the word of hope. Our thought on this subject may be summed up in the words of Pascal, who founded his "Apology for Christianity" principally on the strange oppositions of our nature. "If thou liftest up thyself," he said to man, "I abase thee; if thou abasest thyself, I raise thee." If thou liftest up thyself, I abase thee by showing thee thy corruption and thy nothingness. If thou dost abase thyself by denying thy origin and thy destiny, I lift thee up by showing to thee the remains of thy greatness. From thy abasement I derive a proof of thy condemnation, and of the need which

thou hast of a Saviour. From thy elevation I derive a proof that salvation is reserved for thee by Him who did not suffer thy degradation to become total. Abasement and elevation concur in forming within thee that desire for Christ which prepares thee to receive him.

Will you not at length hear this appeal of divine love, O you who hitherto have refused to believe the gospel? You have not been willing to receive it, because it spoke to you of your wretchedness and of the grace of God. Yet here are those two capital dogmas of Christianity, the scandal of your pride; you meet with them everywhere. Nature proclaims them with all her voices, history unrolls them before your eyes, and you are yourselves unexceptionable witnesses to them. You can not escape from revelation. Should you fly to the end of the world, it would spring up again in your presence. You can get rid of it only by parting with yourselves. To tear up the Bible would not settle the question with revelation. You must tear in pieces your heart, and annihilate it, for as long as it shall beat in your breast it will be a living echo of Biblical truth. Why, then, resist evidence so universal? Why not suffer one's self to be persuaded by such striking contrasts? Why do you not fall at the feet of Jesus Christ, broken by the word of condemnation, to rise again comforted beneath the blessing of the word of love? Peace, divine harmony, would succeed to such heartrending conflicts, and you would not have the bitter thought of having been the prey of an aimless and fruitless sorrow.

Thus, my brethren, we have seen that the work of preparation had its beginning in the very condition of

man after the Fall. But more than this was needed; there needed, first, the experience of life, and then the positive revelation of God, without which the import of these contrasts would have been lost. We have now to show you by what circumstances, by what revelations, and by what institutions God developed the desire for salvation in the first ages of humanity. The facts are well known, and I have only to recall them briefly to your remembrance.

In the first family we already see the commencement of the contest between good and evil, between the seed of God and the seed of the serpent. Abel represents the believing portion of mankind, as Cain the unbelieving portion in his hardness of heart and his murderous hate. The first blood that waters the earth writes on the soil a sad prophecy; it announces the death of a multitude of just men, and above all of the Just One, whose blood, poured forth, shall speak of better things than that of Abel. If we follow the destiny of the race of Adam down to the deluge, this same fact re-appears. Always the sons of God are set over against the sons of men, those who walk in the way of revolt. There is a moment when it seems that the power of evil is about to triumph. The children of God have covenanted with the children of men. From this impious compact there ensued an outbreak of iniquities. There remains but one faithful family,—the family of Noah. Then, by a fearful punishment, the greatest which the earth has experienced, God breaks the power of sin. The deluge is like a second general condemnation of mankind. Everywhere and at all times, it was to recall the sin of man and his

chastisement; as also the deliverance of Noah was intended to inspire confidence in the compassion of God. The family of the patriarch, like the family of Adam, is divided. Once more and quickly sin prevails, and, with sin, chastisement. Unbelieving man falls into idolatry, and a few families with difficulty keep alive faith in the true God. For the few believing souls, how adapted were the events of those remote ages to awaken the desire for salvation! That frightful manifestation of evil, the sight of the immortal creature prostrating himself before stone and wood, the spectacle of his degradation, must have added poignancy and sadness to the feeling that he was a fallen being. The marks of the deluge, everywhere visible, powerfully impressed the soul with a salutary dread of the righteousness of God. On the other hand, the multiplied blessings granted to the men of God spoke of the goodness of the Lord, and revived the hope of final pardon. Did they not behold the pledge of this in the rainbow with which God had connected his second covenant with mankind?

Furthermore, brethren, side by side with events, there was the Word of God, his positive revelation. The promise of salvation grew more precise. It was no longer the great human family, merely, that should beget the Saviour. It was in the family of Adam the branch of Seth, in the family of Seth the branch of Noah, in the family of Noah the branch of Shem. At the same time, while hope was strengthened in the heart of man, his sins were condemned in the plainest language. But there is particularly one institution, going back to the most ancient times, — for it is found

in the family of Adam, — that plays an important part in the preparatory work; I refer to sacrifice. When I say institution, I do not mean that it was directly founded by God. It may have been so; it may be, also, that there was no special revelation on this subject; the sacred narrative bears no traces of it. In any event, it is true that sacrifice resulted necessarily from the condition of man and the promise of God. The proof is found in the universality of sacrifices; a tribe without an altar is yet to be discovered. Sacrifice is, then, the expression of a universal want on the part of conscience. What is signified by sacrifice? For what end was it instituted? Sacrifice is a palpable manifestation of the desire for salvation; not only does it manifest this, but, as with all our sentiments, it excites and develops the desire while giving expression to it. Why do men offer sacrifices? Is it not in order to be reconciled with God? It is in this hope that the lamb and the bull are slain, and the fruits of the earth are offered. Sacrifice is an endeavor after reconciliation, — an incomplete endeavor, since it is continually renewed. What does this import, if it be not man's avowal that he is condemned and sinful? Would he seek to become reconciled to God, if he did not feel that he deserved his wrath? The confession of his wretchedness ascends with the flame of every holocaust. Thus the first feeling comprehended in the desire for salvation — sorrow on account of condemnation — is expressed by sacrifice. The second feeling — hope of deliverance — in like manner finds its symbol there. Would men offer sacrifices if they believed themselves smitten with remediless condemnation? Would they

attempt an impossible reconciliation? Sacrifice is offered only to a God in whom there is hope. This, then, was the language uttered by the victims everywhere slain, by the first fruits laid upon a thousand altars, by the offerings burnt with fire: "O God! be appeased! be appeased! We have offended thee. We tremble, and yet we hope, since we come to thee. When shall the spotless victim come? When shall be offered the sacrifice of a perfect reconciliation?" And as man knew that God took pleasure in such sacrifices, he gained still increasing assurance of forgiveness in the confession of his sin. We may say that from every altar there went up an aspiration toward the Saviour; an aspiration often defiled by the impure incense of idolatry, yet nevertheless gathered up by the true God.

The first period of revelation has shown us the outline of the preparatory work. We pass to the second, in which it will appear to us further advanced. The second comprises the election of a family, and, in that family, of a peculiar people of God. Let us observe, first, that this election is not arbitrary, any more than that of Noah. Noah feared, and built the ark. Abraham believed and obeyed. Faith is always the means by which divine graces are apprehended. Let it not be forgotten that the father of the chosen race was also the father of believers. If we consider this election in itself, we shall understand in what manner it was intended to further the vast plans of divine love. God said to Abraham, "Go forth from thy country, and from thy father's house." Such is the condition of the promise given him in these words: "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The election of a fam-

ily and of a people has not for its object to create a privileged race; which is plainly implied in those words. This election, like every election, is a ministry, and a ministry which is to be exercised for the benefit of all mankind. We ought never to lose sight of the divine purpose in the election of the people of Israel. God designs to bless in them all the families of the earth. In this fact there lies no exclusiveness; the compassions of God are not inclosed in a vessel of election in order to be imprisoned there, but for their preservation thereby, and that they may pour forth the more abundantly upon all. How many times has this election of Israel been misconceived and belittled! Listening to certain interpreters, one would say in truth that humanity exists only for the Jews, and not the Jews for humanity; forgetting the very words of their election, which so clearly define its purpose: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." A transient fact having a special object is converted into a permanent fact. They make the church a satellite of Judaism, called to shine in the future only with the brightness which it borrows from that system. That there are blessings reserved for this people, we cordially concede; but that their destiny shall for ever be as if they were the axis of universal religious history, we deny, even in the name of Abraham's election. God, by that election, designed to labor for the salvation of all the families of the earth.

It remains to inquire how this special election contributed to the work of preparation. You remember, my brethren, in what we made that work specially to consist; it is in the development of the desire for the

Saviour. It was needful that humanity should come to the acknowledgment of its condemnation, and should lift toward heaven a look of hope and supplication. The election of a special people was intended to produce and to strengthen this twofold sentiment. The chosen people, by the fact of its absolute separation from other nations, proclaimed the unworthiness and the corruption of our nature. From its isolation the conclusion necessarily resulted, that in order to be connected with God, it was requisite to be placed apart from the race of man, and to break with it in some sort. What could more plainly reveal to it its wretchedness and its condemnation? It was, then, a profane race; a race lost, accursed, since the first condition of belonging to God was to break all relations with it, and to shun in some sort contact with it. What shame, what a brand for the race! God's people, by their mere existence, were an accusing witness of the Fall. But, on the other hand, did not the choice of a portion of humanity show that for it all was not lost? that there were resources of grace on which it could depend? This imperfect mediation was prophetical of the perfect mediation. Chosen men had the right of communicating with God. Every bond was not then broken between earth and heaven, and the time might arrive in which human nature, forgiven and regenerate, should regain the divine communion of its primeval days. Word of condemnation, word of hope: both were contained in Judaism.

It is an interesting fact to be observed, that, fundamentally, the election of the people of God corresponds to a need of the conscience universally mani-

fested. Everywhere, as we have seen, is to be noted the existence of altars and sacrifices. We may add that everywhere, also, before Jesus Christ, priests were found. Now the feelings which gave rise to the priesthood are precisely those which God wished to develop by the election of the people of Israel. The priesthood is Judaism abridged, as Judaism is the priesthood enlarged. In fact, what is set forth by the selection of particular men to present unto God the incense of an offering, if not the conviction that the remainder of mankind, that is, the mass, the generality, are not worthy to approach him, and that, consequently, humanity is fallen? The priest is an exceptional man; man, as man, is thus regarded as too debased to enter into direct communication with the Deity. The priesthood is a confession made by man of the Fall, while the selection of a special people proclaims it in the name of God. The priesthood had also its prophetic aspect: did it not continually declare the possibility of man's again finding God? Would he have attempted a mediation, if he had not had some glimpses of pardon? The priests were like unto the first fruits of the race placed in the sanctuary, awaiting the day when, as a body, it could enter within through Jesus Christ. Thus God, in the election of his people, sanctions a fact which possessed the universality of conscience. He accepted it, or rather he had already produced it by the dispositions which he breathed into the heart of man. He took it under his immediate direction, in order to cause it to produce, through his culture, a fruit of salvation. Let men cease, therefore, to be scandalized by this election of a portion of the

race, as if it rudely broke off the development of humanity. Before its revelation from heaven, it was partially realized in the priesthood. Israel is the sacerdotal people. In like manner, as no one charges the ancient priests with being opposed to the general welfare, but, on the contrary, they are regarded as an institution advantageous for every nation, so likewise in Israel's priesthood should there be recognized an institution of great benefit to all the nations of the earth.

Moreover, my brethren, whose fault is it if a particular people has been chosen? Must not this be charged on the frightful corruption of other nations? Have we not seen them degraded to such a point that they prostrated themselves before deified matter? Idolatry was one of the principal moving causes of the election of Israel. The worship of false gods had spread with fearful rapidity. It had speedily attained its worst and most infamous forms. Doubtless God was not willing to abandon those idolatrous nations, and we shall show you in their history the traces of a general work of preparation; but it was not the less requisite that a dam should be thrown up to stem the impure torrent of heathenism. It was necessary that faith in the true God should be somewhere conserved, and that there should be a people placed under his direction to receive his revelations, and to keep the deposit of the promises until the day of their fulfillment. Israel, to use the prophetical image, was like a vineyard planted by the hand of God, secured by a hedge against the attacks of wild beasts, — a figure very appropriately representing the gross and impure religions of the old world. If Israel was thus guarded, if God him-

self built a tower and a wall for its protection, it is because he was cultivating in that inclosure the divine germ which was destined to bear the salvation of humanity. We shall see in our next discourse how this germ reached its maturity, and how the desire for the Saviour by degrees attained to its greatest intensity.

The election of God's people had for its object the good of all the families of the earth; such is the thought which re-appears in the last part of this discourse. May it remain graven on your hearts! Not only does it vindicate the love of God, but it also teaches us to consider our privileges in a Christian spirit. Our privileges, like those of the Jews, are a ministry of love on behalf of poor sinners; they invest us with a mission of charity; the more numerous they are, the greater is our mission. They are perverted when considered as distinctions accorded for our benefit. We are not the end, but the channel, of the grace of God. Woe be to us if we desire to check its flow! Woe be to us if we convert the Christian's happiness into a selfish joy! Men have been found who, not content with regarding the election of the people of Israel in an exclusive manner, were wont to speak no less narrowly of the existing privileges of God's people. It would seem, on hearing them, that their chief comfort consisted in the smallness of their number. A little people, a little flock, were favorite expressions with them. With lamentable facility they resigned themselves to the fact that humanity as a whole was lost. They felt no interest in her destinies. In history they saw only a vast evolution of infernal power, a marching on in the road to condemnation. With respect to them-

selves, they found in the anticipated spectacle of those terrible judgments, which naturally did not in the least concern them, an undisguised satisfaction. This exclusive tendency, always foreign to the generality of Christians, proceeds from Judaism, if you will, but from Judaism such as it appeared in the days of St. Paul, proud and narrow, bitterly attached to its privileges as to a monopoly. It is not primitive Judaism, Judaism according to God, through which all the families of the earth were to be blessed; above all, it is not Christianity. Let us put very far from us this narrowness which denies the love of God. Let us acknowledge, without doubting, that many are called, but few chosen, few men answering to the call; but let us acknowledge it with tears. Let us have a tender sympathy for humanity. Humanity! I love the word. It answers to the largeness of the compassions of God. It is for it that Christ died; his blood flowed for all. Our Saviour, says St. Paul, will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim. ii. 4. May every gift which we have received pass from our hearts into other hearts! Let us receive, in order to give. To give is still to receive, for the more faith imparts itself, the more is it nourished. Everything around us protests against the limitation of divine charity. We have shown you that the external world, the most ordinary facts of life, the contrasts which strike us in every soul, and especially the great and universal voice of conscience, bring before every human creature a summons to conversion. Let us treat none of them, therefore, as if strangers. Let us say that the Spirit of God breathes upon all, and that the

preparatory work is outlined in each one of them. Let us carry the gospel to our brethren, as it has been brought to us, with love and with sympathy. Let us show them that this Christ whom we profess is, fundamentally, the desire of their hearts: let our peaceful and joyous faith prove better than our words; that there is a sovereign delight, garnered up in Jesus of Nazareth, to meet the profoundest wants of the heart and the conscience. Then, my brethren, shall we realize the will of God manifested by our election, and which is so admirably expressed in those words addressed to Abraham: "I will bless thee; thou shalt be a blessing." Blessed by the Eternal, may you all become blessings for the families of the earth, and labor in love upon the work of redeeming love!

CHAPTER III.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

JUDAISM.

"Salvation is of the Jews."—John iv. 22.

WE have established, in our last discourse, that the election of a special people of God aided in the fulfillment of the first promise, which is contained in these words: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." We have now to lay before you, in the history and the institutions of the chosen people, the development of the preparatory work. Our text positively declares that salvation comes from the Jews. The circumstances in which these words were announced show forth the importance of them. The Saviour was conversing with a Samaritan woman; she had propounded to him the question which was chief in her estimation and in that of her people: who are right, Jews or Samaritans, in their common claim to possess the true worship which is approved by God? Is it upon this mountain, or at Jerusalem, that men ought to worship? Our Lord declares emphatically that the true worship is that which is celebrated at Jerusalem.

He announces that blessed era in which all local and national worship shall give place to the worship in spirit and in truth; but with regard to that which concerns the past, he fully vindicates the Jewish claim: *Salvation is of the Jews.* That which he declares concerning the Samaritan worship, he would have equally affirmed concerning every other system of worship outside of Judaism. Thus the mission of the chosen people stands before us in all its greatness. It is a mission essentially temporary, as is proved by the prophetical announcement of a worship in spirit and in truth; yet it is a glorious mission. We who do not acknowledge that other nations have been absolutely forsaken by God, we who discern in their history the hand of God, — we are not for these reasons the less persuaded that it was only in the bosom of Judaism that the preparatory work was directly accomplished. With St. Paul we say, "What advantage hath the Jew? Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." Rom. 3:1, 2.

Those oracles sounded forth from the lips of Jews; the prophets and saints pertained to the chosen nation. God has spoken by it, and *to it was the privilege given of speaking to God* in the name of repentant humanity, and to call upon the Saviour. It is upon that sacred soil that the voice of Heaven, promising salvation, and the voice of earth, suing for pardon, have met and mingled together. It is in the posterity of that people that humanity and divinity became united; it is in one of their cities that the word could be spoken, "Unto us is born a Saviour." The patriarchs, the believers, the kings, the men of God in every age, were

the ancestors of Jesus Christ, morally as well as externally. This constitutes the beauty of that genealogy of the Saviour which the Gospels lay before us with so much care. Perhaps you have seen in that only a dry enumeration; but for him who reads it with thorough knowledge of the history of God's people, each one of those names is a brilliant link in the long chain of revelations terminating in Jesus Christ. No, we will not lessen thy glory, people of Abraham, of Moses, of David and Isaiah. If we can not share the chimerical hopes concerning thee that debase and materialize thy true mission, yet do we declare emphatically that no nation has had a vocation similar to thine. Beaten down, despised, like all the chosen of God, thou hast borne in the ancient world the reproach of Christ. Other nations have cast more luster upon history. Thou didst not possess the artistic prestige and learning of Greece, which has ever remained the powerful enchanter of the human mind. But it availed more to become the vessel of clay in which, to use the apostle's expression, the treasures of the knowledge of God were deposited, than the vessel of gold in which error and corruption were inclosed. To all the disdain of ancient and modern wits, thou canst reply by those words of Jesus Christ to the woman of Sychem, *Salvation is of the Jews.* My brethren, let us unfold this important truth; and may I be enabled, by the considerations presented to you, to increase your interest and profit in the perusal of the Old Testament Scriptures! Doubtless you have experienced sweet and serious impressions in reading the most striking and

the most touching pages contained in them. You have enjoyed that noble and divine poetry which is profusely scattered over their pages. But it is not merely the details which ought to edify us; as a whole, they ought to be found profitable. The connection of every part of the Old Testament with the final and sole aim of the entire economy being once perceived, light thence darts forth over many obscure points, and a new interest invests that which had been already read in a fragmentary manner. I suppose the history of the Jewish people to be known to you in its main outlines; I shall limit myself to the task of recalling them, only attempting to give you a clew amid the multiplicity of facts and of divine oracles.

We know in what the preparatory work consists. It tends to develop the desire for the Saviour. It should lead man to weep over his condemnation, and to seek the promised Consoler. It has no other aim than to develop these two sentiments which produce the desire for salvation, — bitter sadness on account of sin, and the hope of pardon. It is necessary for us to come back to that which we have said concerning the election of God's people. We have to show you, in their history, the progressive sense of sin, and the progressive assurance of reconciliation. We distinguish four periods in Judaism. The first is the patriarchal epoch. The second is the formative, the constitutional period; it extends from Moses to the reign of David. The third is the period of full development; rapid and transient, like every phase of prosperity upon the earth, it extends from the reign of David to the fall of Solomon. The fourth is the

period of decline; the decay is at first scarcely perceptible; it is traversed by returning rays of the ancient glory: this period extends from the schism of the ten tribes to the subjugation of the Jews by the Romans, which is the completion of their earthly downfall. Of every one of these epochs we shall have to ask ourselves what God has said to humanity by his revelation, and what elect humanity has answered him; for it is not all to know what amount of divine seed God scattered abroad at each epoch; it is also necessary to know if it has been received, and to what extent. We shall show you the desire for salvation constantly growing in brightness in the hearts of true Israelites from period to period, until all its brilliancy flamed forth above the very ruins of the earthly glory of Israel, and the birth of Jesus Christ gave its crowning fulfillment to the language of our text, *Salvation is of the Jews.*

Let us contemplate Judaism while it still lies entirely confined to the family of the patriarchs. Everything in their lives speaks of man's condemnation and God's love. The smallest incidents have a bearing upon the remote, a rebound in the distant future. Each event conveyed a double message from God: at first, it seemed to bear but one message, relating to the present moment; but soon there comes forth another, of greater importance, which concerns future times. It might be styled a divine messenger, who, when ready to vanish, carries onward into the future, by a gesture, the look and the thought of man. Let us examine from this point of view the trials and the blessings common to all the patriarchs. They

were at first strangers and pilgrims on the earth, possessing only the grand requisite for their burial in the cave of Machpelah. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, although possessed of great riches, did not cease dwelling in tents. In this sense is comprehended the simple fact of the nomadic life led by shepherds in ancient times, — in this is implied the express will of God. The patriarchs traversed countries in which flourishing cities had been built; doubtless they might have desired to erect for themselves a place of repose. But they were forbidden to establish themselves in any country, however smiling and fertile. It was a trial in truth, thus to be strangers everywhere, pilgrims without intermission. But what manner of life more favorable for feeling that since the Fall earth is only one vast place of exile? Nothing was better suited to persuade the patriarchs of this, than for them to lead the lives of exiles in reality and in the very places of their birth. Every country was for them a strange land, even the most known, the best loved, except the narrow ground where rested their fathers, and where they were to rest themselves. Their wandering life was as if a fresh, striking revelation of the condition of fallen man, written not in dead letters, but in symbolical facts. Thus their traveling tent was used by St. Paul as a type in depicting our destiny here below: "We who are in this tabernacle," said he, "do groan." And how escape this groaning when once in such a tabernacle? how not sigh with regret and longing after a more stable life? Assuredly the patriarchs groaned under their life. Far from becoming acclimatized and

sinking to sleep in their transitory condition, they longed, as we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, after a better country. They were men of desire, men of the future. And God had given them the promise of that better country: "God said to Abraham," showing him the land of Canaan, "I will give thee the land in which thou dwellest as a stranger." Gen. 17: 8. This promise was renewed to all the patriarchs. Without doubt it was designed to have an earthly fulfillment; in fact, this it received; but the earthly fulfillment was secondary. To see in this anything but a symbol, to imagine that the eternal possession of the land of Canaan was secured to the Jews, is to deny all progress in the method of divine revelation; it is to detain us indefinitely at the first step, at that which is nearest to the earth. What interest attaches, speaking in a religious sense, to the fact that one family or one people should have in prospect a fair earthly heritage? Let us admit that this promise, like all others, has a material envelope; but beneath this envelope is hidden the immortal hope of salvation. This gross vail is intended to render the hope palpable to man, who is himself gross and childlike. The vail in itself possesses no worth, no value; only that which is hidden by it is to be prized. That land of Canaan imaged in the future to the patriarchs all that was good, all that was beautiful. It was the land of repose, the land of joy; it was the accomplishment of their aspirations for a better order of things in the world. To their eyes it was substantially the kingdom of God set up, salvation attained. And thus, while strangers and

pilgrims, they had an end before them; this end they were ever considering, and they sought it with all their strength. Let us repeat it, they were men of desire.

There was another trial and another blessing which marked the life of the most ancient among the patriarchs: the trial was the prolonged expectation of a posterity; the blessing was the birth of that posterity on whom the blessing was conferred. God had not only promised the possession of the land of Canaan, but he had also said to each one of them, "I will give this land to thee and to thy seed." Those who take the promise concerning the land of Canaan in a terrestrial rather than spiritual sense, and still expect its definitive accomplishment, ought to regard in the same manner the promise concerning the posterity of Abraham. They ought likewise to admit that the point here is the multiplication of this posterity, which became more numerous than the sands of the sea. To this no Christian interpreter will consent, especially if he be guided by St. Paul, who, in his Epistle to the Galatians, separates the spiritual substratum of this prophecy from its temporal form. The symbolism admitted in the latter case ought to be in the former.

The promise of a blessed posterity made to Abraham is in close connection with the promise given in the garden of Eden. The oldest of all prophecies spoke of the triumph of divine love over the power of darkness to be achieved by the posterity of the woman. Every prophecy bearing upon that posterity necessarily implied the birth of a Saviour. Thus the patriarchs must have seen, in the posterity promised to them,

and which had been called to conquer the land of Canaan, a realization of the promised salvation. I know well that at the very first they were expecting an immediate fulfillment of the words of the Eternal. They expected a posterity who should be richly blessed in a temporal point of view; but I doubt not that, without their giving precise heed to it, their hope went beyond this earthly aspect of the promise. In like manner as the land of Canaan represented salvation to their minds in its general outlines, so the posterity that should be established there represented to them the Saviour, the Liberator. The temporal blessing enveloped the spiritual and eternal blessing. The hope of salvation was growing stronger. On the other hand, the trial which preceded the blessing effectually developed the sense of human misery, not only because to be tried was to suffer, but also from its special nature. You know, my brethren, how the fulfillment of the promise of a posterity was delayed with respect to the first patriarchs. Abraham in particular, who, as well as his wife, had reached a very great age, was made to hope against all hope. Isaac was born of parents who had passed the age of child-bearing; he was a child of miracle. Was there not in this delay a glorious symbol of the birth of the seed of the woman? Was it not an indication that this blessed posterity should be not the fruit of human strength, but of the grace of God? Isaac was manifestly a gratuitous and miraculous gift. When Abraham folded him in his enfeebled arms, he was constrained to say to himself, "This heir of all the promises, this precious seed, to whom such high destines are reserved, is the child of my old age and

my weakness. He is a monument of the power of God. To God alone be all honor and all glory! Thus humility was mingled with the joyous hope of salvation, and the desire after Christ, although obscure as yet, was rising, purified, to heaven. Circumcision, which God instituted among the descendants of Abraham, was the seal of this election. On the one hand, it represented the moral circumcision, the mortification of the heart and the will, rendered necessary by the principle of rebellion which sin had introduced; on the other, it represented the favor of God bestowed on the chosen race.

If from facts common to the life of all the patriarchs we pass on to facts peculiar to each of them, we shall discover the same end pursued by the Almighty in reference to them. I shall refer only to the most striking. The faith of Abraham underwent a fearful trial. The Lord asks of him to offer up in sacrifice his son Isaac, that son on whose head repose all his hopes. No words can depict the struggle that must have torn the heart of the father and the believer. It was the greatest sorrow of his life, but also the greatest benediction, for deliverance came to him out of heaven as complete as it was unexpected. The funeral pile on Moriah was a monument of the compassions of God until the day when, illumined with new light by prophecy, and, above all, by the cross of Jesus Christ, it became the type of the most unfathomable mystery, of the Father's love delivering up his only Son as the redeeming sacrifice. Nothing marked is presented in the life of Isaac; it is a reflection, somewhat dimmed, of that of Abraham. But Jacob's life is full of the deepest moving interest.

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That which we have pointed out in the first families of mankind re-appears in the chosen family. The seed of the serpent becomes developed, in this family, side by side with the seed of God. Ishmael, in Abraham's family, represents this wretched portion of humanity. Esau continues the tradition of evil in the family of Isaac. Esau is the carnal man of the present, the man of the earth, the materialist who sacrifices to his flesh the glorious inheritance of the promises; Jacob is the man of the future and the man of desire. His greatest trials come to him from his brother, trials which he has partly deserved by the culpable deceit that was mingled with his faith. He is obliged to flee in sadness from the paternal roof, twice an exile upon the earth, at first as belonging to the strange and wandering family of the patriarchs, and then because he was forced to leave his aged father and his mother, Rebekah. Affliction follows him to the house of Laban, where he is reduced to actual slavery; it accompanies him in his flight, which was full of anxiety, and in his interview with his brother; it deals him some of its heaviest blows when he is called to bury the wife of his choice, and when he mourns as dead his favorite son. But by the side of these trials, what rich consolations! There is first the vision at Bethel, the luminous ladder, representing communication as re-established between earth and heaven; there is afterward the protection that covers him amid the different dangers which he encounters; there is his numerous posterity; there is his well-beloved son found again upon the steps of the throne of Egypt. There is one event in his life which blends its sufferings and its blessings,

and reveals the tie that connects the one with the other; I refer to the mysterious contest which he sustained with the Almighty. He fought with tears and prayers, according to the prophet Hosea. The hand of his powerful adversary inflicted on him a deep wound, which became the sign of his victory, for he immediately received the name of *Israel*, which signifies *conqueror of God*. So then God had smitten him with so many trials only to lead him to that brokenness of heart never resisted by Him who has said, "I dwell with those that are of a broken and contrite heart." God wounds us only in order that he may be moved by us. Man can become Israel, conqueror of God, but not through his strength; it is through his weakness, by the annihilation of his pride; the combat and the victory of Jacob are the glorious symbol of our relationship with God. The patriarch's wound reminded him of the sinful race of which he was a part, as his name assured him of the mercy of God, who is willing to be overcome by our sighs. And this is the reason why this same patriarch, who had said to Pharaoh, "My days are few and evil," could breathe out his soul on his death-bed in a song of triumph which depicted the lofty destinies of his race. Trials and blessings had rendered his desire for salvation more decided; and never did the language of prophetic inspiration proceed from lips better prepared for its utterance.

Such was the patriarchal era. Revelation there appears to us in an artless and childlike form, which gives it an incomparable charm. Truth was rendered palpable and visible by striking acts. Revelation was in the life of the patriarchs like a parable put into action.

But the divine seed was entrusted to a good soil; humble and believing souls received it. The mission of the patriarchs was accomplished. They assimilated to themselves the part of revelation accorded to them. In their persons humanity developed the germ of salvation deposited within itself by the Spirit of God. The longing for the Saviour at the end of this period is more intense than at its beginning. The following period will exhibit to us this desire with a further increase.

This second period is that of the Mosaic dispensation. Let us first speak of facts; we will afterwards enter upon institutions. Events in the history of God's people, alike with those in the lives of the patriarchs, are divided into two series, trials and blessings. There is always held forth, on the one side, God's rod, which bruises the sinner, in order to make further disclosures to him of his condemnation, and, on the other, the helping hand of the Father, holy and good, which raises up, consoles, and restores hope to the afflicted heart. The first trial of the descendants of Abraham, who had become a great people, is their captivity in the land of Egypt. In the memory of the nation that captivity remained as the very type of calamity. Egypt was for them a country of shame and sorrow. The rod of the exactor fell heavily and without cessation upon that poor people, the more to be pitied because they knew themselves to be called to a more glorious destiny. And yet the very excess of their affliction was made to bring them to this destiny, for without those frightful persecutions, without the crushing toil, without the murderous sword of the Egyptian,

the twelve tribes would have quickly melted themselves into the mass of the dominant nation. The children of Abraham would no longer have been strangers and pilgrims. The harsh treatment which they underwent erected an impassable barrier between them and the oppressing race. And, moreover, this suffering, endured by an entire people, smitten, mutilated, trodden under foot, a suffering repeated in each family, fell with its whole weight upon every individual, to humiliate and subdue him before God.

The going forth out of Egypt was itself encompassed with many painful circumstances. How long was it expected! How many delays! What sorrowful hindrances! How often did it not seem that all was lost, and that the chains of slavery had been riveted by a fruitless attempt at emancipation! And what a mysterious trial were those forty years passed in the burning desert! In order to have a just representation of them, it suffices to recollect that more than once the desert made the chosen people sigh after Egypt. The descendants of Abraham were not only, like their ancestor, strangers, from the fact that they did not possess an inch of ground in this world, but they were absolutely apart from all nations, lost in an immense solitude, turning about in some sort within a fatal circle which they could not step beyond; a few days' journey from the land that flowed with milk and honey, yet separated from it by the impassable barrier of a divine prohibition. Every murmur was chastised, every revolt crushed. Almost the entire generation which had left Egypt mingled its dust with the sands of the desert. Surely the God

of justice spoke with a most fearful severity to the proud heart of man in that long and solitary interview between Israel and himself.

And with respect to his goodness, when was that ever more resplendent? When did it manifest itself by more wonders? Shall I speak of that liberator miraculously rescued from the waters in order to be raised up at the favorable time for an oppressed people? Like every instrument of God, he was prepared for his work in solitude, humiliation, and suffering. The mission of deliverance is addressed not to the Moses who is in the Egyptian court, — that man is yet too proud, — but to the Moses who is in the desert, a lowly shepherd, trembling at the voice of Jehovah. Shall I speak of Egypt smitten and appalled ten times before she breaks the chains of Israel? Shall I speak of those waters driven back and heaped up in liquid walls to suffer the fleeing people to pass on dry ground, whilst they roll their vengeful waves over Pharaoh and his host? Shall I speak of that rock transformed into a refreshing fountain, of that bread of heaven falling regularly to nourish a people too often unbelieving? Shall I speak of that cloud, visible sign of the presence of the Eternal? You would be wearied in listening to the enumeration of these incessant miracles before we could exhaust the evidences of the paternal goodness of the God of Israel.

But it is especially in the conquest of Canaan that his love, as his justice, was displayed. You know, my brethren, how speedily that conquest was effected. Little was attributable to human means: it was the

arm of the Eternal which beat down the walls of Jericho, and which opened the way into the promised land to the chosen people. I know that this entrance was accompanied with terrible and mysterious circumstances which have continued to be a scandal to many. The extermination of the Canaanitish tribes chills us with terror, even at the distance of so many centuries. But the degree of depravation to which those impure nations had fallen ought not be forgotten. Israel was as the sword of the divine justice. That extermination was a great national chastisement; and so long as God's right to inflict similar chastisements is not disputed, the destruction of those idolatrous nations, like the deluge, must be conceded. God made use of the sword of Israel, as before he had employed overflowing torrents and the waters of heaven. Moreover, it was necessary, under the old covenant, that his justice should terrify man. The terrible Jehovah could alone beat him down into the dust and make him sigh after pardon. This was an indispensable part of the work of preparation. Do you understand the mixed impression produced on the heart of the chosen people by the manifestation of the wrath of the Most High, of which they were the instrument, and by the continued revelation of his love in that beautiful country which was itself the precious gift bestowed by his love? Was not this mingled impression precisely the desire for the Redeemer, for the divine Joshua of the future; was it not the aspiration for the full possession of that salvation of which Canaan was the magnificent symbol?

The design of God appears to us yet more clearly in the institutions conferred by Moses, in his name, upon the

chosen people. These are combined together to awaken and enkindle that holy desire which is the soul of the ancient convenant. They enveloped the life of the Jew as if with a close net-work which pressed upon him everywhere, in the sanctuary as well as in his house, upon ordinary days as well as upon solemn festivals. You have without doubt been surprised by the minute details entered into by the inspired lawgiver of Israel. They have seemed to you unworthy of God. But it shows a very small acquaintance with human nature to trust solely to great institutions where man is to be prostrated and controlled. It would indicate forgetfulness of the endless shifts to which our frivolity resorts. In order that any truth should act effectually upon us, it is necessary that it be blended with our total life; that everything should recall it to us; that it should be like the sea that wears away the rock by its thousand little waves constantly dashed against it. Detail is of more consequence than generalities, however beautiful these may be. What is it, after all, but the adaptation to every moment, to every situation in life, of the great and sublime truth which lies at the foundation of the institutions established by God? Such truth in its generality resembles an ingot of gold, which is useless till it is coined into little pieces of money. Let us bless God, therefore, for the minute care with which he caused everything to be regulated in the worship and in the life of his people. By this remark we do not desire to defend the exaggerations of those seekers after types who pretend to read the gospel in the robes of the high priest, in the smallest parts of the ark, and in the least important prescriptions of the cer-

emonial law. This is transforming the interpretation of the Scriptures into a childish game, a kind of guessing at enigmas, which amuses the mind while it dries up the heart. We look in the Mosaic system only for the great outlines of the preparatory work, and the general features of prophecy. We find these everywhere, but we find nothing more. Care should be exercised lest, under pretext of taking away the vail from Moses, we put a thicker vail upon him. Besides, to what purpose the indefinite multiplying and refining of types? Most certainly, the Jews did not comprehend them; they were not then designed for them. As regards ourselves, we have that which is better than figures, we have the gospel realities. This madness after types very injuriously affected the preaching of the fathers of the church. It often exhausted the strength of those great intellects on barren subtleties. In our days it has disfigured more than one edifying work. Instead of permitting the sweetness of that word, which the Psalmist compares to delicious honey, to flow into the soul, men have gone to work to count the cells in each comb, and to discuss with regard to their combination.

With these limitations, let us examine the institutions given by God to his chosen people. If we look at these closely, we shall discern in all these institutions the same thought which struck us in the election of a people of God.

These institutions are characterized by some general traits. The chosen people form a theocracy, that is to say, the people are under the immediate direction of God, governed by him. In the laws given to it we

are constantly meeting with one and the same principle, the distinction between the profane and the sacred. The chosen people are separated from all others, as a sacred people; in this people the tribe of Levi is separated from the other tribes. The life of this people is divided into days of rest and days of labor. A sacred place is set apart in the land inhabited by them. The animals form two classes, the clean and the unclean. In like manner as Israel is set apart by God, so in Israel the priests are set apart, and in ordinary life the sabbath and the festivals are distinguished from other days; in the land of Judah, the sanctuary at Jerusalem is the only consecrated place, and certain animals alone are declared to be not defiled. Nothing is more characteristic of Judaism than this being *set apart*. It is found in the whole and in the details; it passes from sphere to sphere as if in a series of consecutive circles. From the national life it enters into the individual life. We proceed to explain this fact which is so remarkable in its connection with the preparatory work.

The solution has been already given in speaking of the election of God's people; for the thought which presided over that election lives also in each one of the institutions of Israel. We have already shown in what manner it could contribute to the development of the desire of salvation. It proclaimed, on the one hand, the fall, the perdition of human nature; humanity was declared to be lost, since it was necessary to be separated from it in order to enter into relationship with him. On the other hand, it proclaimed the possibility of a return into favor, since God deigned,

nevertheless, to accept a human mediation, imperfect, yet prophetic. No man can approach unto a holy God except by a special grace. He has no right to plead, in order to obtain it, as is proved by the fact that this grace possesses an exceptional character. This exceptional character is very important; the exception establishes the rule, that is to say, the general principle of the perdition of mankind, at the same time announcing its re-constitution by showing the possibility of such renovation. In like manner do we find this same characteristic in the different institutions pertaining to the Mosaic system. It was not enough that the chosen people should be separated in the mass from other nations. The human heart is so prolific in illusions, that the Jewish people would speedily forget the profound reason for this separation, this exceptional position; it would forget the corruption of human nature. The separation, the exception, must, therefore, re-appear in the hearts of the people. Hence the choice of a sacerdotal tribe. Hence the priesthood, which, to use a comparison borrowed from the sciences, is Judaism as the second power. The priesthood fulfills, in reference to the chosen people, the same mission which is fulfilled by this people with regard to humanity; it brings before the people the wretchedness, the unworthiness of man, and also the goodness of God, who proposes the means of reconciling man to God. And even this is not enough; human nature is not only defiled in a general manner, its manifestations partake of the defilement. The life of man is an impure life. He must be brought to feel that his life renders him incapable of approaching God, that its habitual current flows far from God, and that

extraordinary grace is necessary in order that he may come before God. Hence the distinction between holy days and common days. The sabbath, the feast day, the sacred days, reminded the people of the habitual defilement of human life, and of the condescension of God, who deigns to provide for man an opportunity of throwing off momentarily this defilement. And even this does not suffice. Man must be brought to feel that the earth which he treads upon is an accursed earth, that there can not ascend from all parts of its surface a worship acceptable to God. Hence the distinction of holy places and of places which are not holy. Hence the erection of a sanctuary, which is a monument both of the fall and of grace; of the fall, since the necessity of a sanctuary has arisen; of grace, since God accepts it. Finally, man ought to feel that the curse which has smitten the earth has smitten all that is contained within it. Hence the distinction between animals clean and unclean, and all those laws of purification which brought before the mind the universality of man's defilement, together with the possibility of its being washed away. Thus, my brethren, this double word of condemnation and of love which we have heard in the outer world and in the inner world, and which is re-echoed by the prayer of man calling upon his Saviour, resounds alike in the most divine institutions of Moses. They send it back one to the other; they all say together to man, "Thou hast sinned; thy race is condemned; therefore is thine a sacerdotal people; therefore there are priests among that people. Thy life is defiled in its source, therefore thou needest special days for worship. The earth itself is enveloped

in the condemnation. For this cause thou hast need of a sanctuary. All that encompasseth thee is changed by the evil principle. For this cause thou hast need of incessant purifications." Priesthood, sabbath, tabernacle, ceremonial laws, — there is no one of these institutions which does not tend to develop the feeling of sinfulness and the hope of reconciliation; in other words, the desire for salvation.

Of one of the institutions occupying the largest space in the Mosaic system I have not spoken, because we have already characterized it in the primitive family of mankind, and have brought forth its peculiarities to the light: I need not say that I am referring to sacrifice. You know the part it plays in the life of every Israelite. Moses established ordinances in the minutest detail for the numerous cases in which men were required to offer sacrifices to the Lord. The sacrifice was for sin, on account of sin. It disclosed its heinousness, and announced the reparation for it. In every lamb that was slain man confessed his guiltiness, and God promised his pardon. I will not insist upon a truth so evident.

But there are two great facts in Judaism to which we are bound to call your attention, because they furnish a striking vindication of our point of view. These two facts are, as it were, the two pillars of the old economy; I refer to the law, and to prophecy. Each one of these corresponds to one of the sentiments which make up the desire for salvation; the law corresponds to the sense of condemnation, and prophecy to the hope of pardon. We have, to support this view, the most positive interpretation, that of the apostle Paul.

The law of Sinai is, according to him, a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that is to say, a severe master, who prepares man to be guided by the gentle Master. How does he bring us to Jesus Christ? By rendering sin *exceeding sinful*, says the same apostle; that is, by forcing sin to manifest itself, to reveal itself plainly in broad daylight. Sin loves darkness; it loves to diffuse itself like a subtle and imperceptible poison through all our emotions; it fears the light; like the serpent who personifies it, sin creeps upon the earth; the more hidden it is, the more safe it thinks itself. But now the law of God comes to tear away its deceitful vails. It can no longer beguile, for by the law true holiness is revealed to man. The law places him in the presence of God. It darts a pitiless light into his heart; it forces him to confess his inward corruption. It sets before his eyes the pure mirror of the divine perfections, and he is constrained with trembling to behold his deformity and to curse it. Thus sin becomes *exceeding sinful*. This is not all. The law awakens in man the desire to realize that moral ideal to which his conscience conforms. But the commandment of the old law brings light without heat. Man necessarily fails in this attempt, and from it there remains to him but the persuasion of his incurable powerlessness. Finally, the law does not cease to be the daughter of Sinai, the mount of the wrath of God. It was promulgated in the midst of lightnings in the presence of a people smitten to the earth by fear, and it is ever rolling over the head of man, like a thunderbolt ready to strike him, thus threatening: *If thou doest not these things, thou shalt die.* Thus the mission of

the law is threefold: to reveal the holiness of God, and, in contrast, the corruption of man, to bring him to feel practically his weakness, and to terrify him by the thought of the anger of God. It presents to man God's justice separated from his love, not only in the domain of the religious life, but also within the sphere of civil life. The law of retaliation,— *An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*, — realized at first in the relations of man with God, enters into the various social relations. The law of Sinai, to employ an image of the Scriptures, holds in its hand the sword of the Eternal. With this sword it pierces man through and through, in order to pluck away from him the dreams of pride, and that he may fall, subdued, crushed, at the feet of the Lord, crying out, "I am only a poor sinner; have thou pity on me!"

And already God was showing pity. Prophecy prevented man from plunging into despair. Like the angel who gathers in his vial our sighs and our supplications, prophecy was gathering up the tears and the groans which the law extorted from man, and was transmuting them into prayer. The law threw him, wounded and bruised, into the dust. Prophecy raised him up, and poured into his wounds the oil and the wine of heavenly love. It was the voice of prophecy that spoke to him of deliverance, which in advance painted to him in mystical pictures the triumphs of the power of mercy. It would be having an incomplete conception of prophecy to see it nowhere but in the oracles of the prophets. It circulated in every part of Judaism, it flowed from every institution, as from every event. The Mosaic system was, as a whole, the figure of that which was

to come. Thus even when there flourished no prophet, prophecy did not cease for a moment to cause its voice to be heard. Even in silence it spoke by the worship, by the altar, by the blood of the victims.

Let us not isolate the law from prophecy, and let us contemplate this double ministry exercising itself simultaneously. The law said to man, "God is a jealous God. Woe, woe unto the wicked! His indignation is like the mighty waters. Rebels and sinners shall be dashed together, and those who have forsaken the Eternal shall be consumed. Ah! I will satisfy myself," he cried, "in punishing mine adversaries. I will take vengeance on mine enemies." Prophecy immediately rejoined, "Though your sins shall be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow." The law cried out, "Desolation! desolation!" Prophecy drowned its voice: "The desert shall blossom like the rose. Comfort ye: behold your God. The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." And thus the law and prophecy walked side by side, the one smiting and terrifying, the other consoling and strengthening. Between the two, man, at once humbled and encouraged, went forward over a desolate road toward a luminous end, throwing himself with all his soul far from a present, made gloomy by the law, toward a future rendered radiant by prophecy. The law and the prophets completed the sum of the Mosaic institutions. We can perceive already their transitory character. The law, in its Jewish form, was to be abolished at the very time of its fulfillment; the prophecy of the Old Testament was to withdraw at the coming of the Saviour, as the figure before the reality.

The distinction between things sacred and profane was destined also to vanish away when redemption should be accomplished and should have reinstated man in his primitive condition. The priests, the sabbath, the sanctuary, the distinction between animals, all these institutions, bound together by one and the same thought, were destined to disappear like Judaism itself, with which they were indissolubly connected.* To carry them onward into Christianity is to deny the difference between the preparatory work and the realization of salvation. Happy should we be if some pious Christians had not been urged by grievous misconceptions on this point to gather up the remains of the old dispensation in order to introduce them into the spiritual temple. This has contributed neither to its beauty nor its solidity. Let us leave the Mosaic institutions to this true purpose ; it suffices for their glory.

If you wish to have not merely an abstract idea, but a kind of intuition of the influence which it was in the power of these institutions to exert, follow me into the holy city at the time when the system of Moses had attained its full development. Let us bring before our minds the life of a pious Israelite, as it was at that epoch. He knows that he belongs to a chosen people, and that he is surrounded with an idolatrous nation with whom he ought to avoid all intercourse. "Take heed to thyself," God has said, "and make no covenant with the land whither thou goest to possess it." He remembers the extermination that was visited upon them in the time of his fathers, and he says to himself, with trembling, that his God is a holy God, who hateth iniquity. By his gifts and the offerings which he lays

* Compare Col. ii. 16, 17. — Ed.

on the altar, he acknowledges his absolute dependence upon this jealous God. His wretchedness and his ill-desert are brought before him by the descendant of Aaron, who alone presides over the worship. He can not sit down to his table, though it be for a feast of rejoicing, without the idea of universal defilement being brought to his mind by the care he is obliged to exercise lest he touch any unclean animal. If he goes into the streets of his city, he must shun contact with all that is profane. Festival days are full of the same instruction for him. The sabbath, the new moon, the seventh month, the seventh year, are suggestive to him of that period of innocence in which the entire life was one peaceful service of God; which it is no longer; for, alas! the time of worship must be set apart by itself. The Passover revives in him the remembrance of the deliverance out of Egypt; the mystic lamb causes him to foresee another deliverance a thousandfold more momentous. The Pentecost takes him back to the day when the law was given to him: Sinai rises before him, and he smites upon his breast. The Feast of Tabernacles recalls the time in the wilderness when Israel dwelt, like his fathers, beneath a tent. Blessings, as well as chastisements, are revived in his memory. But who can truly define that which he experiences when he stands beholding the sacrifice that is offered for the people morning and evening, and especially when he offers a sacrifice for his own sins? He lays his hands upon the victim to constitute the slain lamb or bull his representative. Before the sacrifice is made, he is crushed beneath the burden of his guilt; he is comforted in his heart when the blood has flowed.

Can you think that this feeling is connected solely with the death of the victim? Is there not a voice from God, a voice from prophecy, an inward voice, also, which bids him read in the blood poured forth a promise of complete redemption? He returns hence to his house with more hope, but also with a more ardent desire for pardon, and with a more glowing aspiration to the Lamb of God that shall take away the sins of the world. There was one day in the year which was pre-eminently the day of sacrifice. It was the day of atonement. Bring before your mind that solemn scene, and the impressions which it ever excited in the breast of our pious Israelite. The high priest begins by offering the sacrifice for himself and his family. Then he slays a goat for the sins of the people. He purifies every part of the sanctuary by sprinkling the blood upon it. It is necessary, then, — the believing Jew must think within himself, — that that which is purest and holiest upon the earth should be purified in the eyes of God! O race condemned and unclean, humble thyself in the dust! The high priest has remained alone in the sanctuary for this sacrifice: not only has he sprinkled the horns of the altar, but he has retired within the vail, into the holy of holies. What a moment! This vail which has been raised on this day only, for this man alone, when shall it be lifted up for me? When shall I be satisfied with the joys of thy likeness, O my God? What pious heart does not burn at this hour to reach beyond the vail? All is not ended. The high priest takes a goat, lays on him the sins of all the people by placing his own hands upon him, and sends him into the wilderness, as if declaring that one day

the iniquity should be removed from off the condemned race of man. Oh! when shall shine that day of efficacious pardon? When shall we return into our dwellings free from this frightful and crushing weight of our sins? O Thou who art to come, divine Seed of the woman, Messiah, Deliverer, Saviour, come quickly! Thus in all the solemn feasts there ascended from the sanctuary, as from the dwelling of the humblest child of Israel, every day of the week, that sighing after Christ which all the institutions of Moses were designed to awaken.

We have dwelt, my brethren, upon the Mosaic system, because the full comprehension of it was essential to our purpose. We shall pass more rapidly over the remaining periods in the history of Israel. The period of the chosen nation's full development was as brief as brilliant. After the conquest of the promised land, there follows the tumultuous epoch of the Judges, so fruitful in disasters and in deliverances. The moral fluctuations of the people, tossed to and fro between the worship of the true God and idolatry, are repeated in their destiny. When they forsake God, they are forsaken by him; and then come their chastisements. When they humble themselves beneath his rod, a deliverer is raised up, type of the future Deliverer who shall come in the time of the great humiliation. The form of Samuel, of the Seer pre-eminently, shines with a mild luster in this obscure epoch; it is he who consecrates the first king of Israel. Until then the invisible King had sufficed; external royalty was the fruit of unbelief; but God, deriving good out of evil, converted this into an august type of the promised Mes-

siah. Prophecy found in it an additional lineament wherewith to depict in advance the image of the Saviour. The king after God's heart was David; like all the great servants of the Lord, he was taken from the desert; he was often sent back to the desert during the time of trial which preceded his actual entrance upon kingly power. Afflictions were intermingled with blessings in his life, which was at once so human and so devout. The reign of David, and of Solomon his son, carried the glory of Judaism to its culminating point. After them it begins to decline, but spiritually it still continues; for it is proper to embrace in the period of the full development of the old covenant, the epoch of the four great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel. Let us endeavor to apprehend the results of this period, with reference to the work of preparation. It is characterized, above all, by the magnificent unfolding of prophecy, as the preceding had been by the exhibition of the severities of the law.

We are not to believe that the law was silent during the epoch signaled by the appearance of the great prophets. That is a false and exclusive idea which regards the mission of the prophet as consisting solely in the revelation of the future. He was as truly the man of the law as of the promise. The Hebrew word by which he is designated signifies, essentially, servant, witness of God. God not only said to the prophets, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," but also, "Declare unto them my wrath." Who has ever pronounced more terrible anathemas against sinners than the prophets? Who has painted the iniquity of Israel with more frightful colors? To use their own

figures, "they write the sin of Judah with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond; they grave it upon the table of the people's heart, and upon the horns of their altars." Jer. xvii. 1. If they call upon the heaven and the earth to keep silence, it is to tell them of the acts of ingratitude committed by Israel. The Lord hath put in their hand, which is that of the law, the cup of his anger, and they make all the nations drink of it; Jerusalem first, the cities of Judah, her kings, her principal men, Pharaoh king of Egypt, all the mingled people of Arabia, Edom, Moab, Tyre, Sidon, and all the kings of the North. Jer. xxv.

But at the same time that the prophets prophesy against the sinner, according to the commandment of God, they also announce the wonders of divine compassion. They fill out the picture of the expected future, and represent this future with colors so exact, that at times they seem rather to be relating facts that are past, than to be predicting future events. Let us take up the prophecy concerning the Messiah where we left it. It was speaking to us last by the mouth of Jacob. We know, since the promise given in Eden, that the Saviour is to be a son of man. We have learned from what family he should spring; it is the family of Judah. In the family of Judah he will come from the root of Jesse; he will be a son of David. But prophecy is not satisfied with indicating his genealogy. It describes to us his mission. The first oracles confined themselves to broad generalities. They spoke only of a triumph over evil, of a blessing to be extended over all the nations of the earth. With Moses, prophecy advances a step: "The Lord thy

God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." Deut. xviii. 15. We have here not only the deliverer, we have also the prophet, the witness of God, the revealer. With David the prophecy becomes yet more precise. He is not only prophet, he is moreover king. "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession." Ps. ii. 6–8. Quickly it is no longer merely the prophet and the king who is set before us: there stands the victim: "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days. He shall see of the travail of his soul. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." Isa. liii. Triumph by suffering, salvation proceeding from the death of the just,—in this thought the gospel and the first promise are united together; it is truly the serpent crushed by the heel which he had bruised.

And here we ought to pause a moment, my brethren, to consider the enveloping form of prophecy. It is very important to obtain a just conception of this in order not to materialize the oracles of God. The

prophetic form is essentially symbolical. The prophet paints the future with the lineaments of the present, with the colors and the imagery furnished by the country and the age to which he belongs. It is the only method by which he can be understood. The customs of his people, known events, compose for him a rich and brilliant language, by means of which he reproduces the revelations which he has received. Literal interpretation of prophecy is therefore nonsense; for it confounds the signs with the things signified, words with ideas, the garment with the body. More than this: in general the prophet speaks of near, immediate events; but the prophetic spirit circulates in some sort through all his words; these events become the type of other events of a scope infinitely more important. Jesus Christ, by the overthrow of Jerusalem, describes the end of the world; the two prophecies are as if intertwined. The establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth was announced to the Israelites under the figure of the conquest of Canaan. The prophets of the epoch at which we have now arrived represent the future destinies of the kingdom of God under the image of the Jewish theocracy. Zion, her temple, her worship, her history, furnishes them with the most admirable symbols. To take their description literally is to transport the prose of our pale Occident into the brilliant and poetical East. When the prophets speak of the Messiah, they speak of him also in a symbolical manner. We do not doubt that the Psalms which relate to him are to be applied at first to David, to Solomon, to the Israelitish king; but as the Messiah was to be pre-eminently the King of

Israel, these Psalms applied in a higher sense to Jesus Christ. All Judaism tends to him and prophesies of him. Never is this latent prophecy exhausted by facts of the present time; all relate to him ultimately. This simple thought is calculated to refute many forced interpretations which, in order to make such a passage in the New Testament square with such another in the Old, do violence to the text. The positive prophecies which relate only to the Messiah have always a typical vail; the Messiah is sometimes called David, sometimes Cyrus. It is in like manner with the predictions which relate to the development of the work of salvation. The return from exile represents that which was formerly represented by the conquest of Canaan, — the consolation and triumph of the people of God. Naturally God's people is styled Israel by the prophet; in later days they shall be called the Church. That beautiful name is not for ever the exclusive privilege of the descendants of Abraham. The prophets themselves, in announcing the effusion of the Spirit, declare that the time shall come when "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." Ps. xxii. 27. A new people shall be born to be a witness of this great spectacle. With regard to the prophecies that treat of the final future of the church, we leave them apart, as not entering into our subject. We are deeply persuaded that the same method of interpretation ought to be applied to them. Let us add that this spirituality of interpretation prevents us in no respect from admitting that the kingdom of God will be triumphantly established in the outer world also;

the new heavens and the new earth are a reality to our minds.

In the fruitful epoch of David and the four great prophets, revelation gained a wonderful development. Never did the law fulfill its fearful mission with greater energy. Never did prophecy awaken by clearer predictions the hope of forgiveness. It remains for us to learn whether this twofold word of God was understood and received by man; or, in other phraseology, did revelation attain its end? We have in our sacred books the most beautiful and touching proofs that if God has spoken, man, under the influence of his Spirit, has heard and understood. The life of the saints of the old covenant, that humble and pious life of faith, impressed with a character of such patient submission during their long period of expectation, is already an answer to God's appeals. But there is a part of the Old Testament which introduces us into the inner life of these saints; it is no longer merely the word of God resounding from heaven; it is its vibrating echo in the heart of man. The predictions of the inspired writers are as if intersected by the effusions of their believing souls. There is, first, the bitter plaint of Job, that song of desolation in which the afflicted of all ages have mingled their tears together. Who has ever bewailed human misfortune like Job? Who has more truly revealed its depths? "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived." Job iii. 3. Then follows the melancholy, disconsolate lamentation of the preacher: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The sorrowful contrasts of human life were sufficiently un-

derstood. Can the sense of sin be better expressed than in these words: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way"? Isa. liii. 6. You recognize the voice of Isaiah. Listen to the prophet of sorrows, seated on the smoking ruins of his Jerusalem, and speaking in the name of his people: "I am the man that hath seen affliction. Mine eyes do fail with tears. Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress; mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled." Lam. iii. 1. Listen to one of the later prophets spreading out his soul before God: "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee." Dan. ix. 5. But this song of lamentation which passes from one inspired mouth to another does not ascend to heaven alone. The song of hope rises also. Sometimes it is peaceful, like confidence: "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses;" sometimes it is still tinged with melancholy. After having said, "I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay," Jeremiah resumes: "Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord; for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil-doers." Jer. xx. 13. Often he is full of energetic assurance: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." The suffering and the hope that are intermingled in the holy desire for salva-

tion have thus found this most touching and most sublime expression.

But there is one book of the Old Testament which discloses such feelings in a manner yet more striking. This book, in which the most ardent and devout soul has fully poured itself forth, enables us to read again God's revelation, not now in the table of stone, but in the light of the emotions of a sanctified soul. What mind does not think of the Psalms — those immortal prayers which in the most solemn hours of our lives return to us and take their places upon our lips — as the perfect expression of all that man can ask of God? The Psalms cause us to hear the voice of elect humanity answering the appeals of God's love, and recounting eagerly, under the guidance of the Spirit, that which it owes to the unwearied operation of grace. The external action of grace we have seen in the institutions and history of Israel. Here now we have its inner action. Here is the blessed fruit of this work of love. In the soul of David it presents itself to us; in that human soul, so vibrating with feeling, which opens itself in such moving and burning words, we hear the sighs and the thanksgivings of all pious Israelites. It is in truth the harp of Zion. What saith it to God? God by the law, as well as by the severity of his justice, designed to produce in man the sense of guilt; hearken to this bitter lament of the prophet-king, and acknowledge that God's purpose is fully attained: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned. Hide thy face

from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Ps. xxxii. 3, 4; li. 3, 4, 9, 16, 17. The bruising of man's proud spirit, the breaking of his heart, — is not this the fullest accomplishment of the purposes of God? Sacrifice is here viewed in its prophetic import; this first aim of the old covenant is attained; is its second aim less realized? You know that God wishes to develop the hope of pardon. Is not this hope already manifested in the form of prayer which David gave to his confession? His faith in the reconciliation is so strong that he enjoys in anticipation the most glorious consequences of the redemptive work. "Blessed," he cries out, "is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Ps. xxxii. The hope is as strong as the penitence was earnest. Never till then had faith in salvation manifested itself in so precise a form. Stern law, minute ordinances, exclusive priesthood, rigorous sabbath, bloody sacrifices, your often singular characteristics shall no longer be occasions of offense to us. We have before our eyes, in this penitent sinner, your signal justification; and you, sacred oracles of the prophets, we will no more charge you with being unintelligible. That cry of hope reveals your potent action. At the close of this, as at the end of the preceding period, we perceive that the soul of man has

received the divine seed. The Saviour is nearer to the lost race, for the desire that calls upon him is more positive and more fervent. The work of preparation has taken an immense stride in advance.

And still this was not the last step. The heart of man is so hard that the severest trials were necessary in order to break it. He possesses the disastrous art of turning the best gifts of God against himself. He attempted to pervert the institutions which were intended to prepare for the coming of the Saviour. They had no other end. Judaism may be compared to a vast ship, admirably built, whose masts are firm, and whose expanded sails only await a favoring wind. Without the breath of heaven the ship is of no utility; it is but an inert mass. The wind which should swell the sails of Judaism was precisely the desire after Christ. Let this desire disappear, and Judaism would be only a vessel, motionless and useless. Unfortunately, its tendency was in this direction. The Jews were wont to admire the beauty of its outward appearance, and to forget that it had no other destination than to bring them into the haven of safety. They settled themselves down in the preparatory economy as if it were the final economy. The sail was not spread to the breeze of heaven. It was needful, then, that the outward glory of their institutions should be tarnished, that the theocracy should be abased and humiliated, in order that barren satisfaction with the present should give way to aspirations after heaven. The humiliations of Judaism are of two kinds. They are connected, first, with the political life of the nation, and, secondly, with its institutions. The first preceded the second;

and this has allowed us to embrace the prophets of the time of the captivity within the flourishing period of revelation. The decline of the theocracy begins with the reign of the son of Solomon. The schism which breaks up the unity of God's people, cutting off ten branches from the sacred tree, is the first part of the downfall. For some time longer a religious tie, often broken by idolatry, is maintained with the tribe of Judah, by the ten separated tribes. Two great prophets are granted to them, viz., Elijah and Elisha; their predictions have not reached us, but they were indomitable witnesses to the holiness of God in days of darkness. This feeble tie is quickly broken. The ten tribes are laid desolate, and carried far away. But few remains of them are left, and these, mingling with a mass of pagans, constitute the Samaritan nation. The tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin keep up the true Israelish tradition. Their frequent returns to idolatry bring upon them the severest chastisements of God. The captivity of seventy years at Babylon is the most remarkable. The return of the exiles, a sublime type of the spiritual deliverance of mankind, seems to inaugurate a new era of glory. Ezra and Nehemiah recall to mind the ancient leaders of Israel. The institutions of Moses, more or less forgotten, flourish again. A second temple is erected. But the independence of the Jews is not of long duration. They undergo the fluctuations in the history of Asia which followed the successive partitions of the empire of Alexander. The heroic sword of the Maccabees delivers them for a time from the yoke of the stranger, but soon it falls upon them again with greater weight. The Roman suprem-

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acy enfolds them within that immense chain which was enveloping almost the entire known world. A proconsul enforces respect for the Roman eagles in the city where David and Solomon reigned. It is a terrible humiliation for that people whose patriotism rose to the pitch of fanaticism. Their spiritual humiliations were yet greater. The visible glory of Jehovah no more appeared in the second temple. Prophecy ceased after the twelve minor prophets. There were dissertations on morals, like the Book of Wisdom, but the breath of the Spirit is not in their learned and sensible pages. The temple still remains, the ceremonies are regularly accomplished there every day, the multitude pours into it on the great feast-days; but it is now only a magnificent monument of the past: revelation is silent. What humiliation must have been experienced by the Jews living at that sad epoch, as they compared themselves with their predecessors! What a difference between the voice of the doctors of the law and the powerful voice of the prophets! We shall have occasion, when we come to the life of the Saviour, to depict more fully the state of Judaism at this period. We have said enough to-day to lead you to perceive to what extent it had fallen. This very decline promoted the purposes of God in a wonderful way. It perfected the preparatory work.

Forget not, my brethren, that if prophecy was silent, the mighty voice of the old prophets did not cease to resound in Jerusalem. The contrast between the present condition of the Jews and the sublime future promised to them was of a nature to develop an inexpressible desire for the Deliverer. It was impossible

to be satisfied with institutions which had not prevented the enslavement of Judæa. Their looks were necessarily directed forward. It was with the Jews of that day as it had been with their fathers in the wilderness upon the borders of Canaan. The weariness induced by that burning sky, that arid sand, that naked and mournful land, urged them to anticipate in their wishes the happy moment when they should enter the fertile and smiling country. We have in the gospel itself the evidence of this universal expectation. As soon as a man appears giving himself out to be the Messiah, he is eagerly followed. John the Baptist, the humble and courageous forerunner, is taken for the Deliverer. "Art thou he who should come?" is the inquiry which meets him from all quarters. Doubtless, with the mass of the people such desires are gross and material; but they show that the preparatory work is drawing to a close. Moreover, there are souls in whom, as upon an altar preserved from every profane touch, there is burning the pure flame of a true desire after salvation. Their number is not great, — be not astonished at this, — the seed of the serpent is always in the majority here below; but these few souls are not the less the veritable humanity, the humanity according to God. Their spiritual development is the fairest, the most perfect, fruit of the work of preparation. It shows that the elect humanity is ready to receive and to bring forth the Divine Son who should crush the head of the enemy. And here, my brethren, we are not reduced to suppositions. We have positive proofs in the gospel. Behold in the temple of the Lord those two aged men who are waiting

for the hope of Israel with such confidence that they know they shall not die until they have seen the Saviour with their eyes. Read the canticle of Zachariah at the birth of John the Baptist; read the song of Simeon when he takes the child Jesus in his arms; you will acknowledge that never in the past was the desire for salvation expressed in so admirable a manner. There is no longer any vagueness in the language. It touches directly upon the salvation "prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people Israel." The sufferings of Christ are partly seen; they are symbolized in the sword which shall pierce the heart of Mary.

The mother of Jesus Christ is herself the most touching proof that the preparation is completed, for she appears to us, in her feelings and disposition, as if the personification of the elect humanity destined to receive the Saviour. Do not fear, my brethren, lest we fall into any superstitious notion. We reject with indignation the worship of the mother of Christ. However lively this indignation, we are persuaded that it can not equal that which would be felt by Mary, were she to see her image upon the altar. But we firmly believe that she offered to divine grace a soul well prepared to receive it, and that she was to such an extent full of hope and desire for salvation, that she represented our poor fallen race on the day in which she received the divine child into her womb. Herein is the reason why the new dogma proclaimed by the Bishop of Rome aims a blow at the fundamental principle of Christianity. In truth, if the mother of Jesus Christ was not truly a daughter of man, if she did not really pertain to our

poor fallen humanity, Jesus Christ has not taken on him the nature of man; he could not be the Mediator; he is not the Son of man, but the son of I know not what fantastic humanity, dwelling in a cloud between heaven and earth. There was not the necessary agreement between God who bestows and the human soul which receives his gifts with the joy and eager delight of a holy desire. The desire for salvation would not have been apprehended on the part of Mary, if she had not been a sinful creature. It is precisely because, after having sinned, she wept over her wretchedness, and longed for the Deliverer, that it became possible for her to be chosen to conceive him by the power of the Holy Ghost. She was judged worthy to be the mother of the Saviour only on account of the profound sense which she had of her unworthiness. O virgin of Nazareth, if thou hast been blessed among all women, it is because thou hast been the humblest of all. Humble was thy position; daughter of the kings of thy people, thou didst hide in obscurity thy high descent, and didst represent in thy lowliness the salutary lowliness of thy nation. Humble was thy soul, and the song in which thou dost disclose to us its sentiments is the purest and most spiritual expression of this desire after salvation, of which thou offerest to us the full maturity: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Luke 1: 46, 47. You understand her, it is of the Saviour that she speaks; he is not now merely to her eyes the king, the prophet, the propitiation; he is all that at once. He is the Saviour. "For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." Here is the world of hu-

miliation, waited for during so many centuries. Let not Mary be despoiled of the sense of this lowliness. In order to lead man to confess it, God has not ceased to beat him down to his feet. "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats." Satan is vanquished; these words must convince him of it, for humanity acknowledges its nothingness by the mouth of Mary, and weeps over its revolt. "He hath exalted them of low degree." The lowly, the humble, — these are the chosen of God; and it is because she is in this blessed low state that she is able to add, "He remembers his mercy." Yes, he did remember it. Already has the angel Gabriel announced to her the birth of her Saviour. She confesses, in the name of our fallen race, her lowliness and her condemnation; she has clearly seen the mercy of her God. The times are ripe; nothing further remains to be added to the desire for salvation; and therefore is she already bearing in her womb the divine seed promised to humanity so many ages since.

It would now only remain to us, my brethren, to trace out before you the life of Christ, if we had not still to show you how, in a less direct manner, God had prepared men outside of Judaism to long for the Deliverer. This will be the object of our next discourse.

It seems to us that the conclusion of this discourse is an earnest appeal to our souls to be converted. This immense work of preparation which we have endeavored to unfold before your eyes had for its end the salvation of each one of you; yes, my brother, whoever you are, though you should be the most wretched and the

most worthless of men, God was thinking of thy soul during all the course of the ancient dispensation. Toward that the endless chain of his revelations was tending. It is thy salvation which he was preparing from the very first days, beneath the trees of Eden, when he promised to Adam the divine seed that should crush the serpent's head. It is thy salvation which he was preparing during the patriarchal epoch when he conversed with Abraham, and when the angel of his presence broke bread with him at Mamre, and when he wrestled with Jacob near the brook. It is thy salvation which he was preparing in the chosen people, in their deliverances and in their chastisements, in the wilderness as well as in the promised land. It is thy salvation which he was preparing when from the top of Sinai he revealed his terrible law, and when by the mouth of Moses he announced the great prophet who should save his people. It is thy salvation which he was preparing at the altar of sacrifice, in the solemn feasts, and in those numberless ordinances which were designed to engrave on the heart of Israel the thought which had induced him to choose them for his people. It is thy salvation which he was preparing by the oracles of his great prophets, by the penitential tears of David, as well as by the burning and lofty hymn of Isaiah. It is thy salvation which he was preparing in the glories, as in the reverses of the theocracy; amid the ruins of Jerusalem, as by the rivers of Babylon. It is thy salvation which he was preparing in the final humiliations of Jerusalem, when the victorious strangers were trampling upon its sacred soil. If God, according to the word of Jesus Christ, hath worked from

the beginning of the world, it is for thee, my brother. His eye beheld thee in thy obscurity, hidden in the generation to which thou belongest. The salvation which he was preparing was not a collective salvation; it was an individual salvation, it was salvation for thee. And now it is for thee to decide if the work of so many centuries shall be in vain. In refusing to be converted, thou wilt cause it to be in vain according to the measure of thine ability. Thou wilt render it abortive for thy soul. It would be in vain that God during four thousand years has smitten, blessed, humbled, raised up humanity. My brother, would you requite such persevering love by such ingratitude? Are you willing to break, to destroy the plan of the divine compassion? Are you willing to strike with sterility so many revelations, and so many prophecies? Shall it be in vain that the arm of the Lord has been revealed with so great power, that his mouth hath spoken with accents so paternal? In vain! No, that is not possible; others will receive the salvation which thou wilt have despised. It shall be with thee as with those Israelites who, after forty years' journeying in the wilderness, fell dead upon the borders of Canaan. Already were they beholding the wonderful countries, already their foot touched the soil; but they disbelieved God, and their long pilgrimage resulted only in the most cruel deception. Since the work of preparation is finished, we are dwelling upon the frontiers of the spiritual Canaan. Are we willing to fall there, like the unbelieving Israelites? Ah! let us rather confess that God has done everything to enable us to gain entrance; let us suffer ourselves to be persuaded by these revela-

tions without number which have brought us to the threshold of the true promised land; and let us enter within, following in the footsteps of the divine Joshua, blessing the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of David, of Isaiah, and of Daniel, the God of Simeon and of Mary, the God of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the saints. To him be the glory throughout all ages for the work which he has accomplished on our behalf, alike under the old and under the new covenant!

CHAPTER IV.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

PREPARATION AMONG THE HEATHEN.

Acts xvii. 16–34.

WE have sketched in its great outlines the preparation for the coming of the Saviour in the history of the Jewish people. To-day I shall call your attention to a point too much neglected; I mean the preparatory work in the bosom of the pagan world. Here, as ever, the doctrine of Scripture is infinitely broader than the theology of men. While exhibiting to us the Jews as the only recipients of a positive revelation, Scripture introduces other nations into the vast scheme of redemption, and shows to us the finger of God in their history. "God, after having made of one blood all nations of men," says St. Paul, "to dwell on all the face of the earth, hath determined the bounds of their habitation." Thus the historical development of those nations, and the very limits of this development, are appointed by God; and as all things concur, and all work together in his hands to accomplish the plan of salvation, we may be assured that the history of the heathen nations before Jesus Christ tends to prepare the way for his coming. We shall not

weary of repeating that the special acts of election on the part of God are for the greatest good of humanity, which is his chief election, whenever the purpose of his love is not brought to naught by the persistence of the race in its rebellions. No more in the past than it is in the present was it, as a whole, given over to itself. The God of Abraham has not ceased to be the God of Adam. If he has developed the desire for salvation among the descendants of the patriarchs, he has also developed it, although less directly, outside of the favored people. We have the most striking proof of this in the facility with which Christianity was propagated in the midst of the pagan world. It might be styled a conflagration, which, because everything was ready for the kindling of the fire, spread as on the wings of the wind as soon as the flame had once burst forth. Three centuries had not passed away before Christians are enabled to say to the pagans, "We fill your cities, your armies; we are everywhere." Who does not see that the times were ripe, and that the furrows had been dug to receive the everlasting truth? Unless it be alleged that these were opened entirely alone, without God's concurrence, the operation of grace must be admitted in these favorable dispositions. If an objection is made on the score of the bloody persecutions, we answer that the Jewish people did more than persecute Christians, — they put to death the Son of God; and yet they were the people of God. We must in all cases consider, not the unbelieving masses, but the individuals who separated themselves from the mass to receive the appeals which God addressed to them by diverse methods.

We have to determine the notion, and to trace the history of this preparation in the midst of the pagan world; and, in order not to be led astray in pursuit of vain suppositions, we take as our basis the admirable discourse of Paul at Athens. This discourse comprehends all that we have need to know on this important subject. We shall not, moreover, be saying anything new; our point of view is that of the ancient Christian church. The fathers of the first three centuries proclaim aloud that there existed in pagan antiquity a great number of noble spirits, who, without being conscious of the fact, were longing after the great Deliverer. They gather up these aspirations with care; in their Apologies they invoke the testimony of the poets or philosophers who, in the midst of the thickest darkness, have shot out one ray of truth. It had not yet been thought of to consider the advent of Christianity as a fact entirely isolated in the history of mankind. Those great Christians of the first centuries were persuaded that there is a close relation between the conscience and Jesus Christ; and even while pointing out with unrivaled force the shameful and infamous features of paganism, they never failed to bring out this relation to the light. Tertullian does not fear to cite the human soul as a witness to the truth; he goes so far as to affirm that the soul is naturally Christian; not in the sense that it can do without regeneration, but in the sense that, when its true nature is not falsified by sophistry, its spontaneous cry is a prayer to the God of the gospel: "Thou art not, that I know," said he to it, "Christian by nature; thou canst not be born Christian; thou must become

such. Nevertheless, Christians invoke thy testimony."* Justin Martyr goes farther; he recognizes in serious men of the pagan epoch a seed of the Eternal Word, — a seed not developed, incomplete, but nevertheless precious. "Every one," says he, "by the germ of the divine Word which is in him, sees a part of the truth, which is harmonious with himself." † Clement of Alexandria, in showing the inferiority of the high Greek culture in comparison with the Hebrew revelation, perceives therein, nevertheless, as regards the parts of truth comprehended in it, a gift of God. ‡ In so far as it has awakened the conscience slumbering at the foot of the altars of false gods, it has been a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ. § It has been like a flickering candle, and it has only now to go out in presence of the radiant sun. ‖ Do not forget this broad defense of Christianity was the defense made by martyrs, and this Justin, who was the first among the fathers that sought to harmonize the gospel with the better aspirations of the high Greek culture, died for his faith. Those facts will re-assure you; you will understand that these heroic defenders of Christianity were making no concession to error, and if they sought beneath the impure wrecks of crumbling paganism for some particles of truth, it was in the holy desire to gain souls for Christ by becoming all things to all men, after the manner of St. Paul; and therefore, as if drawn by the loadstone of a sympathy so genuine, united to a belief so well grounded, sober-minded men, athirst for faith and con-

* Tertullian, *De Testimonia Anim.*, c. 1.
† Justin, *Apologia*, i. p. 51.
‡ Clement, *Stromata*, ii. 15.
§ *Strom.*, ii. 20.
‖ *Strom.*, ii. 63.

solation, who had fruitlessly made trial of all the philosophies of their times, were seen flocking to these Christian apologists. At Alexandria a great school of catechumens was opened, and around the Clements and the Origens were gathered a crowd of pagans, who had come from the most remote portions of the empire. Instead of the cold teachers or puerile rhetoricians to whom they had been accustomed, they had at length discovered men who comprehended their anxieties, on account of having passed through them, and who were able to discern in the former beliefs of these heathen that which connected itself with and sustained the new and ultimate faith. Let us take heed not to be narrower as regards doctrine, and more lax as regards practical concessions; that is to say, narrower as respects other persons, and more lax as respects ourselves. It is not allowable for Christians of our day to charge upon the Christians of the first three centuries an exaggerated spirit of concession. This reproach, proceeding from elegant drawing-rooms, and arraigning that church which was offered up and crucified like its Master, — such a reproach would be a scandal; it would be tainted with heresy, for it would strike at the great apostle of the Gentiles, who first opened the way to the fathers in his discourse at Athens.

It is evident, then, that our point of view is the point of view both of the apostolic church and of the church which was in immediate contact with the pagan world. The contrary opinion, denying all preparatory work outside of Judaism, is a new opinion, apart from the true church tradition, by which I understand the Biblical tradition. It is with entire free-

dom that I enter upon this important subject which concedes to the work of preparation, and consequently to the work of redemption, its full dimensions. It will be necessary to ascertain in what manner God developed the desire for salvation among the two pagan nations which exerted the greatest influence upon the destinies of the world; the names of Greek and Roman are already on your lips. All my statements will be directly developed from the language of St. Paul. And first, I will give a succinct analysis of his discourse. Taking occasion from the altar to the Unknown God, which he saw in the city of Athens, he seizes upon the religious want which that fact supports, and, setting out with the general idea of the Godhead and of man's relation to it, already recognized by a pagan poet, he proceeds to announce to the Athenians the true God, who can not be comprehended in a material temple, who is nigh to every one of us, and who, after a time of ignorance, revealed truth and salvation in Jesus Christ, and has given in him the pledge of the resurrection. I shall not follow word by word the language of the apostle. I will direct your attention to those words which expressly relate to the preparatory work in paganism.

But let us make a preliminary remark: the historical part of revelation was not absolutely unknown to the Gentile nations; this may be everywhere found in its main outlines. It might be said that it is with these universal traditions as it is with the debris which the waters of the deluge transported into so many countries, depositing them upon mountains and plains. In like manner the waters of the primitive emigrations bore

along with them the dogmas of the Fall and of redemption, often disfigured and perverted, but still discernible notwithstanding the parasitic vegetation which covered them over, and at times concealed them. It is easy to believe that the nations who were neighbors to the chosen people preserved more fully those traditions which are the traditions of the entire human family. Notwithstanding the lofty barriers which were reared between the different nationalities, all contact between them could not be prevented. The nearer we approach the epoch which beheld the birth of the Saviour, the more frequent does this contact become. The vast monarchy of Alexander in its very dismemberment brought Europe and Asia together. The Roman empire rendered this collision, or rather commingling of ideas and of beliefs, more complete and universal. The revelation given to the Jews, without being known very accurately, was at least diffused as an influence in the moral atmosphere; we ought never to forget this action of the oracles of God; though not easily appreciated, it was powerful. No one will dispute the importance of this fact. But it should not be exaggerated, by alleging that there was no other trace of divine operation in the pagan world than these fragments entering gradually into the circulation of the thoughts of that epoch. We believe that there was a preparation more direct, more inward, for developing the desire of salvation; and this belief we hold in common with Paul.

He quotes a very remarkable expression of a profane author: "We are the offspring of God," had been said by the poet Aratus. The meaning which

the apostle gives to these words is that the filial relation to the Creator subsists even among the heathen; that the relationship between man and God in some degree had its existence also among them. From this it ought to be inferred that the heathen nations were—though, doubtless, less directly than the chosen people—under the operation of the Spirit of God. We are already apprized of the manner in which this action of the Spirit must have been exerted. To develop the desire for salvation constitutes the entire preparatory work. If the heathen nations were not forsaken by God, it follows that we can authenticate among them the marks of the desire for the great deliverance; that is to say, the marks of the sense of condemnation and of the hope of pardon. I shall not repeat that which we said concerning man in general, while establishing the truth that everything in his inward and outward condition brings before him his fall and speaks to him of hope. The point now before us relates not to man in all ages and in all places, but to the heathen. The question to be solved is this,—Were there evidences among the heathen of a desire, more or less developed, for salvation? The quotation from St. Paul is sufficient as furnishing us with an affirmative answer, and is the more conclusive because, in recognizing this paternity of God, and consequently this operation of his Spirit in paganism, St. Paul relied upon positive proofs drawn from the life of the brethren themselves. He rested upon that which he had seen in that very city of Athens. He had been struck by four characteristic facts which bore the imprint of man's high destiny, and also of his efforts fully to re-

gain that destiny. What were these facts? What was their scope? We are to make these inquiries of the apostle.

And first, he had perceived, both in the public and private life of the heathen, indisputable traces of the moral law which speaks through our consciences. Doubtless corruption had superabounded; it burst forth on every side like an impure torrent, but even in cities the most defiled, the most degraded, the moral sentiment was not entirely stifled. So long as a society subsists, we may be sure that there is some element of good in its constitution. The total absence of the moral law would be equivalent to the annihilation of society; there would remain only a disorderly, frightful struggle, without cessation and without result, between strong interests and savage passions. It would be a desert inhabited by wild beasts. There is no society without laws, and there are no laws without the idea of good and evil, often perverted in its applications in the most deplorable manner, but nevertheless proving that conscience yet speaks in man. It was enough for Paul to traverse even one city like Athens to discover in the social bond, however imperfect it might be, a moral tie, and consequently a tie of connecting men with God. But the moral sentiment had manifested itself with greater force in the individual life. Had not a part of this same Athens* spoken of those eternal laws in which there is a God who groweth not old,—laws of immutable justice, against which, as against an immovable rock, the unjust laws of men must be broken? Was

* Sophocles, *Œdipus Tyrannus.*

it not beneath the shades of a well-known garden in Athens that the most ideal of thinkers had developed the purest, the most disinterested morality? Had he not declared that it was a thousand times better to be the victim of the wicked man than to be the triumphant man of wickedness? Had he not laid down that rule of conduct which seems to be an echo of the gospel, "We must in all things imitate God"? If very scandalous acts had carried sorrow to this city, had it not been the witness of great acts of courage and devotion? Was it not in one of its prisons that Socrates, unjustly condemned, had refused to fly, because he would not be guilty of even a slight falsehood? and was it not here that he had drained the cup of poison, to obey God rather than men, as he had said himself? How many other facts occurring among the nations of antiquity had proved that the voice of conscience was not dumb! These recollections pressed upon the soul of Paul when he said to the Athenians, "We are the offspring of God."

I know well in what way some men have got rid of the virtues exhibited by the heathen world. They repeat the famous expression, "These are brilliant sins." If it is meant by this that such virtues are mingled with sins, we fully admit it; if any go the length of alleging that these virtues have no reality, and that they are but a false picture of virtue, we deny it; we deny it with St. Paul, who, in his Epistle to the Romans, declares that the Gentiles often show that that which is written in the law is written in their hearts. Rom. 2: 15. The law in their hearts is the same with that which thundered on Sinai; and when it is

manifest in their lives, it accomplishes the same mission. It discloses the heavy darkness of evil, which it illumines as with a flitting ray of light; it awakens that aspiration after the just and the holy which lies at the bottom of the human heart. It has also its prophetic aspect; for the manifestations of good in paganism, its acts of heroism, of development, were like those wondrous fruits which were one day brought from the promised land to the people of Israel while still wandering in the wilderness. There is hope for the future. The conscience is a title of nobility which does not confer the right of mourning a rank lost by the Fall, but it confirms in a striking manner the words of the apostle to the Athenians: "We are the offspring of God."

Paul had also read these words upon each one of the numberless altars which filled the most brilliant city of Greece; and this is the second of the characteristic facts of which we have spoken. "Men of Athens," says the apostle, at the opening of his discourse, "I perceive that you are in all things devout."* He knew better than any man to what extent this devotion was to be deplored, since it spoke of those forms of pagan worship which were stained with so many atrocities, and which burned incense before such abominable divinities. Paul had beheld the famous Parthenon, the magnificent temple erected to the Goddess Minerva, near the citadel of Athens, in which shone her splendid statue of gold and ivory. He had passed before the temple of Jupiter. From the very top of the hill on which he stood, his eye

* The true reading of Acts xvii. 22. — Ed.

could embrace that multitude of statues and monuments, all erected for some heathen purpose. All those gods were false gods, were impure gods. And nevertheless, the existence of a religion, however degraded, is a proof that the idea of God has still a place in man. I do not repeat what I have already said on the subject of sacrifices, which are so closely connected with the belief in redemption, and which would alone suffice to establish the reality of the preparatory work in the pagan world. I take the fact that a religion exists in its widest generality; and I affirm that it fully justifies the language of Paul to the Athenians, "Ye are the offspring of God." Notwithstanding the errors, the defilements of your mythology, he could say to them, I recognize in you the need of entering into relationship with the Godhead. I know well that you have deified your passions, and it is they who sit enthroned upon the summit of your sacred mountains; but it is not the less true that you can not do without that semblance of divinity; you acknowledge your dependence upon a superior power. You endeavor to become reconciled with it. It is that power which you fear, and which you adore at those times when you enter within yourselves, and not the infamous Jupiter and his lustful cohort. Whatever may be your devotion, it discloses in you a mysterious disquietude with regard to the wrath of the Godhead, and a vague hope of appeasing that wrath. Demons do not rear temples. It is not possible for you, even in your wild excesses, to throw off the yoke of the idea of God; and by nothing is its power more clearly proved than by its continued

operation, even when you desire to serve your passions wholly and alone. "You are the offspring of God."

There is a third fact which we find indicated in our text, that is in further confirmation of this strong expression. We read in the 18th verse, that "certain philosophers" began to speak with the apostle. I do not now inquire of what sect these philosophers were; I confine myself only to their common quality of philosophers; and I remark that the single fact of the seeking after truth reveals both the fall of man and the hope of restoration. Philosophy is a word that has a disagreeable sound in Christian ears, because it too often recalls to our minds the revolt of thought and the pride of reason. Too often, especially since the Christian era, has human philosophy been one of the most active forces of anti-Christianity; it has sought out much speech where a right heart had only to believe and obey. It has insulted Jesus Christ, or has disdainfully passed him by as not entering into its systems, or it has wished to make him speak according to its behest, and to insinuate surreptitiously its impious formulas under cover of his divine word. Rarely has it been down on its knees before the cross, with humility sounding the great mystery of love. It was quite otherwise in pagan antiquity. Philosophy was verily the search after wisdom, after truth. It was in opposition to the religions of the day, but not to religion itself. In many instances, it was a courageous attempt to tear away the vail from the pagan myths, in order to reach a purer idea of God. It did not attain to that, for, as the apostle has said, these are things which do not rise up from the heart

of man. Philosophy became at times the unworthy accomplice of moral corruption, by assigning it a position of legitimacy. In antiquity, the sophists were its scourge. But when we view it in the hands of a Socrates or a Plato, it appears to us very imperfect, very cloudy with respect to results, but very great as regards its aspirations. It does not have that ungovernable pride which denies the Fall. It admits it in the most touching manner. "Formerly," says Plato, "we enjoyed a delightful view and spectacle; we were initiated into mysteries which might be styled blessed, and we celebrated them exempt from the imperfections and the evils which awaited us in the sequel; we admired these objects, perfect, simple, full of repose and blessedness, and we contemplated them in a pure light, ourselves being pure. Pardon," he adds,— and we may think we see a tear ready to fall,—"pardon this tediousness on account of the sorrow awakened by the remembrance of the spectacle which we then enjoyed." * I cite this passage to show that ancient philosophy, notwithstanding all its wanderings, was not always a rationalistic philosophy, flattering human pride. It preserved, it awakened the sense of man's fall, and its very existence evinced in man the hope of one day finding again the truth. A wavering torch, agreeably to the figure of Clemens of Alexandria,† its flickering light could not take the place of the sun; and in this sense we may say, "Where is the wisdom of the wise?" But it could reveal the darkness, — which is already something gained, — and, on account of the

* Plato, *Phædrus;* or, Concerning Beauty.

† Clemens of Alexandria, vol. iii. p. 22. Leipsic.

little light which it gave, arouse the desire that the morning star should rise. Faith in the immortality of the soul, in moral responsibleness, in the good and the just, though insufficient to impart peace to the soul, yet developed its higher instincts. With respect to salvation itself, that is, absolute truth, the wisdom of the Greeks, like all human wisdom, was foolishness; but as regards the preparatory work, it had a great mission to accomplish. However numerous and lamentable were the errors of those Grecian systems of philosophy, we ought not the less to acknowledge that such seeking after truth brought to light both the necessity and the possibility of redemption. What advantage in seeking that which one possesses? and why engage in the pursuit if it were certain that it is irrevocably lost? "Offspring of God," we will exclaim with St. Paul, even on beholding these philosophers of fallen humanity, — "offspring of God," for if thou hadst not in thy immortal soul the thirst after truth, thou wouldst not go about to dig for thyself so many cisterns which, although broken and defiled, are the monument of that holy desire after the true which consumes thee; "offspring of God," but fallen, for if thou wert not fallen, thou wouldst now, pure thyself, as one of thy noblest representatives has said, be still contemplating in a pure light those objects of absolute truth which are in their simplicity perfect and full of blessedness and repose. Fall and restoration, sorrow and hope, the desire for salvation burns upon that profane soil; the preparatory work is there continued.

There remains a final fact that might have led Paul

to say, "You are the offspring of God." Those words are not the apostle's own language; he appropriated them to his use. He borrowed them from an ancient poet. In truth, he expresses himself in these terms: "As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." This fourth fact which demonstrates the reality of the preparatory work in the pagan world is, then, poetry or art. I do not wish to exaggerate the apostle's thought; he certainly did not intend to say that poetry had directly assisted in bringing man back to God, but indirectly its action has been very great. We know its influence, especially upon that native land of art, beneath that marvelous sky, in that country which it seemed to have chosen for its home. The apostle perceives that Greek poets had some preconception of the truth. He borrows from them their own expressions, in order to paint the high destiny of man. It is a fact the scope of which can not be diminished, and which had already been remarked by Christian antiquity.* Thus, therefore, poetry, or art — to speak in a general way — has had its part in the preparatory work. And here, my brethren, from the imperfect and often corrupt productions of art, you must be directed to art itself, to the general fact controlling all its different manifestations. Too often poetry, like philosophy, has intoxicated the poor heart of man, and held him down upon the earth by its fascinations. Too often has poetry been like those sirens of antiquity who thrust upon the rocks the wretches whom they had seduced, having charmed them only in order to effect their ruin. But Paul's citation is not the less his act;

* Clemens of Alexandria, ii. p. 64.

the poets, in his view, have but expressed the high original of man; whence it results, also, that it is they who have most fittingly bewailed our actual condition. In truth, from the substance of all poetry and of all art proceeds this lament: "Man the offspring of God, but his offspring miserably fallen." We have seen that religion, which is the seeking after God, shows that we have lost him, but we can find him again. We have seen that philosophy, which is the seeking after truth, shows that we possess it no longer, but that it is, however, not far from us. Poetry reveals the same truth in another domain. Poetry is the endeavor to attain the ideal on the earth, and this ideal is beauty pre-eminently. If you inquire of me why we seek for this, a Grecian philosopher will answer you. According to Plato, the joys procured to us by the few traces of beauty which we find here below are a reminiscence of that which was seen by the soul when it possessed true being;* they are the pale reflections of that abode of absolute beauty in which man formerly dwelt. Poetry seeks to multiply these, and thereby recalls to mind our high original. If this imperfect world were our native land, we should regret immortal beauty no more than the bird of night the day. We seek to escape from the real world because it is for us a place of exile, and we are the offspring of God. If our dungeon were closed round on all sides, we should sink to sleep between its walls. But it is not thus; to use a comparison of this same Plato, although chained at the bottom of the cave where we are captives, we perceive thrown upon the wall, and painted

* Plato, *Phædrus.*

there, some ravishing images of the abode of perfect beauty. Our aspirations toward that beautiful abode prove that the fallen race is not in a returnless exile. Whenever the poet or the sculptor seeks to give a transparent reality to the ideal partly discerned by him, a remembrance and a hope meet together in his work, and constitute its supreme beauty. Sometimes the remembrance is bitter, like an inconsolable sorrow: human destiny is then depicted in its most tragic forms; the contrast between that which it ought to be and that which it really is, is presented in a heart-rending manner. In the choruses of the ancient tragedy, more is comprehended than the expression of private griefs; they send up to heaven the great human lament, the lament over the Fall. "O wretched race of mortals!"* Such is their mournful burden. Special calamities are swallowed up in the universal misfortune. At other times, it is the ideal aspect which predominates in the art. It shows the harmony of the soul and the body in advance of beauty rendered permanent in marble or upon the canvas; or it enables us to discern the purest moral beauty in some sublime creation. Does not the Antigone of Sophocles give us a foretaste of Christian charity when she justifies herself for having done good to her enemies by these almost evangelical words, "I was not born to hate, but to love"?† Sometimes, again, as in the "Prometheus Bound" of Æschylus, poetry prophesies the downfall of the pagan gods, and speaks of a God in the future, whose victorious arrow shall pierce them upon Olympus. It always

* Œdipus, v. 1216.

† *Antigone*, v. 530.

proceeds, in these different manifestations, from the conscious sense of the fall of man, and rushes on with eager fancy toward the ideal, the realization of which is inseparable from the work of restoration. We can therefore very easily understand that it was a poet who pronounced the noble words accepted by St. Paul. That race which can not remain peacefully in the midst of present reality, or content itself with its daily bread, but which shakes off its destiny, like a chain, in order to create to itself an ideal world of perfection and beauty, is a divine race; it is not made to be bent toward the soil which it tills, but, as another poet has said, fallen from heaven, it is mindful of its origin. A desire for redemption is breathed forth with the songs of the lyre of poetry, songs so full both of sadness and of beauty. O Athenians, your poets have not deceived you; you still pertain to the offspring of God.

Thus, my brethren, the four most characteristic facts in pagan antiquity sustain the declaration of our text. I know well that these constantly appear in history defiled with sin: paganism degraded devotion; philosophy frequently fell into the hands of sophists and men of pleasure; poetry and art were fearfully sullied, especially in the later ages, by licentiousness; human virtue was perverted by pride. Nevertheless, these four facts, taken in themselves, give testimony to the indestructible relationship of the human soul to God. They exhibit to us this relationship such as the Fall and the promise made it to be, constrained to seek by painful effort that which formerly belonged to it in its own right, but daring the attempt to find it again in the name of a mysterious hope which is the remote

and often enfeebled echo of the first promise. Let us hasten to add that the preparatory work would have been insufficient if it had been marked only by those general qualities which belong to all times and all countries during the epoch of paganism. A certain desire for salvation was diffused in the world at that period: it increased by being expressed. But more than this was needed; just as the institutions given to the Jewish people were interpreted by the events of their history, in like manner these characteristic facts of pagan life revealed their deep import only by means of long and repeated trials. Agreeably to the image employed by a church father, the hard envelope which concealed a savory fruit must be broken little by little; the slow toil of centuries was necessary for that. The often sorrowful unfolding of the destinies of pagan humanity was the method of fulfilling God's plan with regard to the Gentiles. That which by consent has been styled profane history, had a divine purpose and end; from the beginning to the close it was ever aiming, like sacred history, to prepare for the coming of the Redeemer. The discourse of Paul at Athens throws the most vivid light on this important point.

God, we read in the 26th verse, "has determined the bounds of the habitation of the nations, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him." Understand thoroughly the thought of the apostle, it explains to us the entire preparatory work in the pagan world. He is evidently speaking here of heathen nations, for the people to whom the holy oracles were intrusted have not been compelled to seek God by feeling after him. It pleased God, then,

that these nations should be obliged to find him by groping. Did he refuse the light of revelation to them in anger? No, my brethren; God never refuses to impart truth. We firmly believe that if mankind as a whole had been capable of bearing at once the full brightness of the truth, it would have been granted to them without delay. But human pride prevented the speedy bestowal of salvation; that pride must be broken. We have seen by what dispensations it was broken in the chosen people. That which was effected among them by revelation was produced among pagans by the absence of revelation, admirably characterized in our text as groping after God. In Judaism God reveals himself, but his revelation crushes the rebellious spirit. In paganism he does not reveal himself in a historical revelation, and yet man, who has gone astray and is lost without recovery in the labyrinth of his thoughts, is equally subdued. Here it is God's power, which by manifestation of itself breaks the creature, more or less given over to himself, and convinces him of his nothingness. Thus, by different ways, the preparatory work is identical; and, when the times are fulfilled, Jews and Greeks find themselves alike humbled at the foot of the cross, as it is said that the rich and the poor meet together in God. And if the pagan is not entirely without hope, that proceeds from the fact that the Spirit of God has prophesied in his heart, as he has done by the predictions of the Hebrew prophets. At the same time that he was convinced of his nothingness, a mysterious voice spoke to him of restoration. From one attempt to another to find God by feeling after him, man's humiliation became more

complete, and his hope brighter. From epoch to epoch, from deception to deception, the desire for salvation was enkindled again and again into a brighter flame.

The preparation for the gospel in the pagan world was, therefore, according to St. Paul, a long and crushing experience of human impotence, a series of despairing attempts to find God, the steps of one who gropes his way toward the light. This great work terminated when man, weighed down with a darkness almost as thick at the end of history as at its beginning, sent forth a long cry of agony. If this sad period unrolled itself so slowly, it is to be attributed only to persistence in the illusions of pride. It is not through the good pleasure of God that ages of darkness succeeded to ages of darkness; in this prolongation of the pagan epoch we know not which is the most incomprehensible,—the patience of divine love, or the obstinacy of human pride.

It is impossible for us at this time to describe these attempts of humanity of itself to find God by feeling after him. We shall confine ourselves to recalling the principal among them to your minds. We distinguish three periods in the history of paganism, which are three great attempts to walk in this gloomy pathway, groping after God. Doubtless all the nations did not at once pass from one period to the other. There are those, for instance, who are like laggards in religious history, and who have remained even until now in their first endeavor to seek God. We put these on one side; we speak only of the nations that played a part on the true theater of history before Jesus Christ.

Such passed through three principal phases. Mysterious thing! Their first step was their heaviest fall. The first groping of humanity after God was the grossest idolatry. It took for God that which it found beneath its hand; that is to say, inert matter, or rather nature, the outward world in its seductive or terrible aspects. The religions of nature are both voluptuous and sanguinary, infamous and savage; they adore the power of production as well as the power of destruction. The lustful Astarte, and the cruel god Baal to whom little children were sacrificed, are the two leading deities of those gross religions; their worship was a mixture of debauchery and of murder. The Old Testament paints them in the most hideous colors, as they existed among the Canaanitish nations who were contaminated by them. In such religions you find no moral ideas; they do not ascend even to the distinction between good and evil, for nature includes none of the revelations of conscience, and he who adores nature finds in it only blind forces. The refined pantheism of India greatly surpasses the gross naturalism of Asia Minor, but it terminates in the most extravagant asceticism, which goes to the length of losing the entire world in the abyss of the Absolute Being.

Humanity could not rest in that; it still gropes its way, it makes one step. The Parsee religion is a tentative effort to escape from the religions of nature; but it has only a half-way success. Light and darkness, Ormuz and Ahriman, belong still to the lower world. The moral world is not yet reached. This new religion can not, therefore, indicate a second period. The second period begins with the Greek religion.

From one act of groping after God to another, man has come to conceive of the divinity under human form. Beneath a beautiful sky, in a youthful race endowed with the most brilliant genius, this idea flourished, being at once adorned with the most poetic colors. Man imagines himself to have reached the term of his groping after light. He has a moment of rapture. The sky is blue above his head, he is in the strength of his youth. To celebrate his new God he has the most wonderful poets, whose poesy is perennially fresh and delightful; to glorify his beauty, he possesses the chisel of Phidias and Praxiteles. He adores him upon Olympus, and in splendid sanctuaries. In fact, he never and in no place ceases to adore him. Is not a Greek city in all its parts a temple erected to humanity? Is it not humanity whose festivals are observed in gymnasia, in solemn games, and in the theaters? The Greek life splendidly flowing in the sun is the joyous worship of humanity. Patriotism, love of one's country, of human society, is, truly speaking, the most earnest religion of those times. Concern for his own dignity is, for the Greek, the essence of virtue. Humanity believes that it has nothing more to desire; a divinity participant in the nature of man, does not this respond to all his needs? We should be ready to acknowledge it, if the gods worshiped in Greece were real gods; if they descended from heaven to clothe human nature and to purify it; but to desire to have the divinity spring out of the earth, to place it in some sort in man not yet renewed, — this is the worst illusion, and we shall quickly see the result in which it terminated. There is no God-man possible,

except through the incarnation. This enchantment, this festival of the Greek life, was not to last, thanks be to God! This Eden, attempted upon our sinful earth, was to be closed like the other. Already, in the most flourishing epoch of Greek paganism, it contained the germ of its own destruction. At first, even in deifying humanity, Greek thought had entered a domain lying above the religions of nature. The idea of morality is too closely connected with human nature not to be gradually elicited from it before the eyes of its admirers. Conscience, which almost wholly slept in the East, appeared in Greece, and with it the vengeful fire which shall consume paganism. Legislation in Greece was infinitely superior to oriental legislation. A certain moral sap circulates in its high literature. But moral ideas are developed only in opposition to paganism. Socrates and Plato give to such ideas the sublimest expression which they have received outside of revelation, and they are almost led to the worship of the one only God. Philosophy was the most energetic solvent of Grecian paganism. Scarcely has man congratulated himself on having no longer to grope his way, when it becomes necessary for him to resume his travels and his dubious researches. He will not reach the end until the time when he shall fall, from weariness and from sorrow, upon the way.

This weariness and this suffering mark the last period in the history of paganism. Many circumstances have brought it on; one of the most important, beyond question, was the extension of the Roman domination, which, by collecting the gods of all countries, placed them face to face with each other. They could not be

brought together without being broken. The triumph of Rome was, furthermore, the result of countless checks and sufferings of all kinds. Rome herself, according to the beautiful image of an ancient, when she had conquered the world, was like a gladiator, who, having triumphed over his rivals, has no further occupation but to turn his sword against his own breast. The humiliations on the one hand, and satiety on the other, this vast skepticism produced by the confronting of diverse religions with each other, the delicate flower of the poetical paganism of Greece bruised by the rude hands that were binding the nation with chains, the exhaustion of the sap, the extreme age of one race,—all these causes combined led to an epoch of bitter and universal deception. The attempt to find God has shamefully failed. Humanity gropes toward the East, the West, the North, the South. It gropes everywhere, and finds nothing. It curses the gods that are known, and from the crumbling fragments of all the temples it builds an altar "to the unknown God." This is the most solemn moment in the history of the ancient nations, for it is the completion of the preparatory work. I shall therefore call your attention more particularly to this last period of paganism, so admirably characterized by the words of St. Paul. The desire for salvation burns upon that altar to the unknown God, for if constructed from the ruins of paganism, it is at the same time a stepping-stone to Christianity. It is an epitome of the final phase of pagan antiquity, with regard to its deceptions and its aspirations. It is all contained in these two words, deception, aspiration.

God designed to bring it to this point, out of its succession of sterile researches.

In all the spheres of national and individual life, you will find this deceit to have been bitter and to be irrevocable. Of this, numerous proofs are furnished by the city of Athens, which the apostle Paul was traversing. And first of all, what cruel deceptions in social life! You know the importance which public life assumed among the heathen. It absorbed the individual life. Everything was referred to the state; men lived in the open forum. For a long time the Athenian had it in his power to honor his country, for it was free and flourishing, notwithstanding its narrow limits. Had it not driven back the fleets and the armies of the great king at Salamis and at Marathon? The defense of her liberty, the jealous care of her interests and her glory, had passionately inspired the Athenians for centuries. It can not be denied that the sentiment of human dignity was strong in those little republics; their agitations, their struggles, even their revolutions, had exalted it into an indomitable haughtiness; but those times of glory and freedom were also times of ineradicable pride. And now, what has become of that independence of their country, which had inspired the most beautiful masterpieces of human eloquence? Attica is a Roman province; proconsuls from Rome grind it down. No more animated discussions, no more passionate harangues. The people still resort to the market-place, but the sacred historian informs us that it is only to learn some new thing. That which took place at Athens took place elsewhere. Everywhere has liberty disappeared, and

Rome herself is the most enslaved of cities. The age of the tribunes shall no more return. A great writer of this epoch paints its degradation with one word. "Consuls, senators, knights," said he, "all emulously rushed into slavery;" * and he who had the most to lose ran the fleetest in this race.

If we enter the domain of thought, then we must still say deception. How many researches, how many gropings after truth, since the day when the first philosopher gave form to his system! What regal genius did Grecian thought display, sometimes rising with Plato into the regions of the ideal, at times scrutinizing with Aristotle, by the aid of an incomparable analysis, the very heart of the real! Apart from the negative side and the moral influence, what has been the result of these great philosophies? The philosophers spoken of in our text teach us this too plainly: they belonged to the Epicurean and to the Stoic sects. The doctrine of the former is summed up in the word "Enjoy." The doctrine of the latter has for its formula: "Die;" for its last word is suicide. These two doctrines are two doctrines of despair. They candidly renounce high and profound speculations, declaring that they avail nothing, and comparing them to a boyish game.† To the cast down and discouraged souls of this epoch, the Epicurean addresses but one consolation: "Turn away thine eyes from heaven," said he to man; "heaven is a vast void. Seek forgetfulness in enjoyment. Crown thy brow with roses, and make of thy life one long festival." Epicureanism is smiling despair, the most frightful of all, for nothing is more

* "*Ruere in servitium.*" Tac. Ann., ii. 7.
† Seneca, *Letters*, 107.

bitter than this forced smile. "Put away," it says, "politics, art, speculation; *Enjoy!*" *

The soul comforted in this manner turns to the Stoic. His austere appearance, his manly and serious air, inspire confidence. Alas! far from healing despair, he declares it to be without remedy, and says to the soul, "Thou hast nothing besides to expect, for the fates lead us on.† Die in thy suffering. Endeavor only to die on your feet. If suffering is too great, seek to escape from it by some diversion; thou canst even ask forgetfulness of wine.‡ If it returns implacable, crushing, kill thyself." § Suicide is then truly the ultimate conclusion of stoicism. Such is the result of human philosophy, — to die by material enjoyment, or by suffering! It only remains for it to proclaim its own death; and this it has not failed to do by proclaiming that absolute skepticism which is equivalent to the suicide of philosophy, in the melancholy words of Cicero: "The philosophers of the Academy affirm nothing; they despair of arriving at any certain knowledge." ‖ They despair! You hear it, ancient philosophy abdicates in despair.

Of little moment are these accumulated deceptions, if man has not been deceived in his attempts to find his God. If his hope has not been misled in this regard, let him be comforted for all his other reverses. But, as you already know, the worst deception of that epoch is religious deception. Liberty departs, phi-

* Plutarch, *Contra Coloph.*, c. 33.

† "*Fata nos ducunt.*" Seneca, *De Providentia.*

‡ *De Tranquillitate Animi*, 15. "*Usque ad ebrietatem veniendum.*"

§ Seneca, *Letter* 70.

‖ "*Desperata cognitione certi.*" Cicero, *De bonis*, ii. 14.

losophy departs; but, above all, the gods take their departure. They are still indeed upon their altars; the usual sacrifices are still offered to them; the sacred fillets, the victims, the processions, the augurs, all the outward forms of worship, subsist; but it is nothing more than a corpse. Belief, which is the soul of all religions, withdraws from paganism; and soon, like a body deprived of life, it will return, we will not say to the dust, but to the dirt from which it was taken. Those gods in the past so venerated are now mocked and rallied in the most insulting manner. At one time their existence is denied, as by Lucretius; again they are transferred into the class of agricultural symbols, as by Euhemerus; sometimes they are subtilized, after a sort, into a vague pantheism, as by Plutarch. That they are no longer believed in, is undoubtedly true. And those who still believe in them, not being able to gain peace by means of them, fall into agonies of superstition, which becomes a real madness. A pagan author has painted for us their sad condition. "Suffer," they say,—"suffer the wretched man, the impious, the accursed, who is hated of all the gods, to undergo his punishment. The superstitious man sits down in the dust; clothed in doleful sackcloth, he rolls upon the ground. Near the antels* he finds nothing but terror. The specters of his imagination follow him by night as by day. His reason is always dreaming, and his fear keeps unceasing vigils." †

The decay of religion manifested itself also in an outward way. The oracles are silent. A pagan

* The *antelii* or *anthelii* were images of the gods that stood before the house-door. — ED.

† Plutarch, *De Superstitione.*

writer declares that intercourse with the gods is like a river whose waters dry up in the sand. Silence and solitude reign at Delphos.* The gods die. But there is one god especially, who, like Vulcan in the fable, falls wretchedly from Olympus, where he had been thoughtlessly placed. It is man, — man so poetically adored by Greece. Never, doubtless, were greater pains taken to accomplish his apotheosis, but never was that apotheosis a more ignoble comedy. The human divinity in the times of St. Paul is personified in the Roman emperor. Their god is to-day Nero, as yesterday it was Claudius or Caligula, as to-morrow it will be Commodus or Domitian. With a nod he governs the seas and the land, peace and war.† He has the right to say, All things are lawful for me with regard to you.‡ And this human god, who has his temples and altars, is the greater part of the time a monster, at times a fool, who is plunged into the most infamous debaucheries, and, when wearied with his pleasures, turns for relaxation to pillage and murder. Greek polytheism terminated in the bald-headed and squint-eyed Caligula, or the corpulent Vitellius. What a fall! It is intelligible that, in presence of the known god, who is some ignoble Cæsar, men should sigh after the God unknown.

It is not merely in the person of the emperor that humanity is degraded. Corruption is general, and is terrible; it is such a corruption that to describe it would be a sin. We must not relate that which they

* Plutarch, *De Oraculis*, v.
† Pliny the Younger, *Trajan's Panegyric.*
‡ Suetonius, *Caligula.*

do in secret, says St. Paul. Call to mind the admirable first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; the apostle sums up the picture, at once sober and fearful, which he has traced of the men of his time, with these energetic words: "God has given them over to their vile affections!" After reading the authors of that period, we rise from the perusal with our minds troubled, and as if stained by contact with such a prodigious infamy. The cynical maxim, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," resounds from one end of the empire to the other; it passes from banquet hall to banquet hall, like the burden of a mournful song. We are about to die; well, then, let this day without a morrow be a day of endless debauchery and of stupendous voluptuousness. We think we see the crew of a ship, who, perceiving that they will soon founder, consume in a last scene of riotous feasting that which should have supported them during a long voyage. Corruption is not the privilege of a single class. We have the most positive information showing us that it pervaded women as well as men, the highest classes as well as the lowest, masters and slaves alike. Voluptuousness and cruelty, two inseparable sisters, walk together hand in hand. The emperor puts the senator to torture, the senator grinds the rich man, the rich man tortures the slave; the whole race is but one worthless herd for the sovereign, and this wretched herd is still divided into two portions: on the one hand are the masters, on the other the slaves. Oppression exists at every step of the social ladder. Everywhere are found division, hatred, vileness. We were therefore right in saying,

It is a time of despair. Yet the word despair indicates too much moral energy. Man is palled, wearied with everything. It is a profound remark in which a cotemporary sums up this sad epoch. "What torments us," says Seneca, "is not the tempest, but nausea." * Nausea! that is the secret, — incurable, universal *ennui* of humanity returned from all its illusions. It suffers from this moral nausea without being able to heal itself, and yet wishes to escape from it at any cost. Hence such unheard-of luxury and feasts that cost millions of sesterces; hence such ferocious amusements. The Roman people must have a circus flowing with blood, because the people are sated and sick. The greater their ennui, the more cruel are their amusements. In like manner as it becomes necessary to increase the dose of opium for a persistent malady, so this incurable patient seeks an ever augmenting excitement in his bloody pleasures. When you see the people, as sovereign, inundating the circus with their terrible waves, athirst for blood, and satisfied only when the contest of gladiators ends in a real battle, do not forget that word of Seneca, "We suffer not from the tempest, but from nausea;" and at the sight of such abominable spectacles, or such unbridled debaucheries, say within yourself that not less than this was necessary to humanity, now undeceived, in order to make it forget that so many endeavors and gropings after truth had ended in nothing. Deception, universal deception!

Yes, it is deception; but there is aspiration, also, the

* "*Non tempestate, sed nausea, vincor.*" *De Tranquil. Animi*, c. 1.

quivering of a mysterious expectation! This expectation is fruitful and blessed on the part of a few persons only, but it is observable everywhere. We have evidence of this in our text itself. Paul has scarcely arrived in Athens, men have scarcely learned that he brings with him a new doctrine, when they press upon his steps, listen to him eagerly, and put questions to him. The Athenians exhibit the same disposition with the Jews in the time of John the Baptist, when they sent an embassy to him, asking, "Art thou he that should come?" But we have sure indications of this universal aspiration. First, all the historians of the age are unanimous in signalizing among their contemporaries a singular readiness in accepting that which they called foreign superstitions. "They find admittance more and more," we read in Tacitus.* The people showed by this that their religion appeared to them insufficient, and that they had a vague hope of discovering a better. But it was especially toward the East that all eyes were turned. Suetonius informs us that throughout the East it was the common belief that the government of the world would shortly belong to a man who should come out of Judæa.†

In different classes of society this longing was expressed in different ways. Among the people it had a grosser manifestation: it was shown by the belief in magic, at that time generally diffused. The magicians had an immense influence over the people; we have a striking proof in the Acts of the Apostles. We see an entire people at Samaria fascinated by the enchant-

* "*Externæ superstitiones valescunt.*" *Annal.*, ii. 15.

† Suetonius, *Vespasian*, iv.

ments of Simon the Magician. History teaches us that a general tendency was revealed by this fact. Why were impostors so eagerly followed? It was from the same motive which urged the inhabitants of Judæa to follow into the desert the false messiahs in which that age abounded; it was in the hope of finding a deliverer. They said of Simon Magus: "This man is the great power of God." Acts viii. 11. They saw in him a manifestation of divine power, they hoped to find in him a Saviour. False deliverers and false saviours succeed only when the true is expected and desired. On the part of thoughtful men the longing for salvation is otherwise revealed. It seems at times that they catch a glimpse of the Christian ideal; often words escape them which are like an echo of the gospel. They speak of woman, of the slave,* in a manner almost Christian; but a few lines further on they contradict themselves. It is constantly manifest that that which Christianity brings to the world is seen in anticipation, and very surely desired by them. They also express very strongly the need of new consolation. "Give me," wrote Pliny the Younger to one of his family, in a time of mourning,—"give me new consolations, great and strong, of which I have never heard nor read. All that I have read and heard comes back to my memory, but my sorrow is too great!" † Does he not speak in the name of the entire family of man? "My suffering is greater than all which I know;" this is the cry of a heart undeceived. "Give me new consolations!" this is the eloquent expres-

* Works of Pliny the Younger, and of Seneca.

† Epistle I. chap. 12. "*Aliqua magna, nova solatia.*"

sion of a burning desire for the Comforter! These words are the hymn and the canticle of the pagan world lifted up to the unknown God. Listen, finally, to the recital of a man of the age who became in the end a fervent Christian, and who in many respects personified his epoch before his conversion. The fictitious hero of the *Clementina*,* constituting himself in this instance the faithful echo of the truth, relates to us in these words the beginning of his life: "From my earliest youth, I have been wrought upon by doubts. They followed me everywhere to torment me, and when I wished to get rid of them this torment increased. I knew full well that there existed a heavenly guide to lead me to the truth, and I sought him from place to place. Tormented by these thoughts from my youth up, I resorted to the schools of philosophy, but in vain. I was tossed to and fro, from doctrine to doctrine, more wretched than ever, as if borne along in a whirlwind of opposing ideas, and I sighed from the depth of my soul." Was not this sighing, my brethren, the entire preparatory work? Does it not mingle in some sort with the expectant sighs of Simeon and Anna the prophetess, as well as with the prayer of Mary? Has not the desire for salvation reached its very highest degree of development? Does not the altar to the unknown God cause that aspiration to go up to God like the fragrance of acceptable prayer? Are we not authorized in saying, with respect to the pagan world, that which we said regarding the chosen people, — the times are fulfilled?

It is precisely because he proclaims him who is not only the Jewish Messiah, but also the desire of all na-

* Mosh., *Eccl. Hist.*, vol. i. p. 76. — ED.

tions, that Paul, "unacquainted with the art of speaking well, unskilled in elocution, with a diction that betrays the foreigner, is able boldly to enter polished Greece, the mother of philosophers and orators; notwithstanding the opposition of the world, he will there establish more churches than Plato, with that eloquence thought to be divine, could gain disciples." * The trial of man's nothingness is complete; he has nothing more to hope for from earth; God's purpose is accomplished. He has long enough walked on groping his way, according to the expression of our text, to understand that of himself he can discover nothing, find nothing that is satisfying. He has become like that poor blind man whom the evangelist Luke shows to us at the gates of Jericho asking alms of the passers-by. Yes, pagan humanity, in its wretchedness and its despair, asks an alms of the philosopher, begging to know if he has a doctrine which consoles; of the Egyptian priest, of the Oriental magician, to know if his belief may not be less empty than the Greek religion; of the soothsayer himself, to learn if his divinations do not contain a power from God. But none of them could give him anything efficacious, anything healthful. Poor blind man, take courage; thou shalt not be long obliged to grope in the night! Already, like Bartimeus, a vague rumor of the coming of the Deliverer has reached even to thee, and thou hast begun to cry unto him. Already thou hast said to him in the depth of thy heart, "Have pity on me, heal me." Fear not, he is very near thee; has not St. Paul declared that God is not far from us? He comes, he has already come. The

* Bossuet, *Panegyric on St. Paul.*

unknown God is about to unvail himself, and at the touch of his compassionate hand light will dart forth from thy blinded eye! Thy cry has been heard; the times of preparation are fulfilled. To us the Saviour is born; and to him, my brethren, we shall now lead you. We shall no longer detain you upon the threshold of the evangelical history, but in our next discourse we shall fully enter within. We shall seek our Saviour in the eternal glory of the Father, in order the better to measure his humiliation. Thus his divinity and his humanity will first occupy our thoughts. Then, having known his nature, we shall inquire what objects he came to accomplish upon the earth, what plan he pursued, what means he employed, with what purposes he executed his plan: and following him from the cradle to the cross, and from the cross into the garden where he appeared to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, we shall endeavor to unroll before you the picture of his ministry until the day on which he ascended to heaven, whence in like manner he will descend again, and whence he does descend every day by the Holy Spirit which unites us to him through faith.

You have doubtless anticipated a comparison which I can not refrain from urging at the close of this discourse. I refer to the analogy between our epoch and the epoch which we have been describing to you. Does not our age also seem appointed to demonstrate the powerlessness of man to accomplish anything good or fruitful apart from God? Notwithstanding the gospel revelation in the midst of Christendom, humanity as a whole has again begun to walk alone, refusing the aid of Jesus Christ, and thus condemning itself

once more to grope on miserably. Blindly groping after the truth, it has come to a condition resembling that of the pagan world, at least in so far as that is possible for a society which has in its bosom the leaven of the gospel, or rather the salt of truth, which alone preserves it from absolute putrefaction. Let us speak of our French society. Has not this been a hard age in that respect, an age in which deceptions have been interlinked one with another? In the domain of social life, as in the domain of philosophy, has there not occurred the bruising, the breaking, of all the hopes cherished at the close of the last century,—hopes based upon man, and consequently fragile and momentary? Has not skepticism made frightful progress in the domain of the religious life? Has not that superstition re-appeared which is depicted by Plutarch,—the fear of a soul that has not known the God of forgiveness? And looking in another direction, has not mocking unbelief its thousands of organs? Can not we descry especially that torpor, that listless, sated mood of mind which is everywhere making its steady encroachments? And may not the men of our day repeat those melancholy words: "That from which we suffer is not so much the tempest as the nausea." Yes, the general mind is cloyed and lifeless. Show us among the men of this generation those who have ardor for action, who are animated by enthusiasm, by faith in anything. Where are they? or, if they are somewhere, in what corner are they hidden, that so little of them is seen? We have no young men even, now, no youth, possessed by any illusions, influenced by any generous impatience. There is abundance of good in circulation, industry achieves won-

ders,—I admit this,—but what good is accomplished by these implements of activity if the moral spring is relaxed, if materialism renders all fruitful activity impossible? Our epoch, also, is characterized by deception. But since the fact of deception prompts the soul to aspire, even the greatness of the age is connected with its deceived condition. The altar to the true God will in like manner be constructed out of the crumbling remains of all the others. It will not be an altar to a God unknown, but to God who is forgotten.

This altar we are assured is already building.

Yes, there is something that sighs after it in hearts which are not dried up by materialism. An immense void is felt, which God alone can fill, a sadness which earth can not console. We ask of you only, O you who have known this sorrow, not to console yourselves too soon, not to mislead that sacred thirst after truth and after salvation. Suffer not past experiences to be lost upon you. Do not admit as consolation that which was never such. Repeat the profound thought of the pagan philosopher, "I need consolation, new, great, and solemn." If they tell thee, for example, Forget thy sadness, come, sit down at our feasts, share our pleasures; call to mind the Epicurean of paganism, and reply, Thou art not a new comforter; thou hast ruined those who have believed thee for eighteen centuries: depart from me! If they tell you, Trust only to thy reason, reject all revelation, walk with brow lifted toward heaven; recognize the proud philosopher of ancient times, and answer, Thou art not a new comforter; thou art doubtless reserving sui-

cide as the last of thy counsels: withdraw! If they say to you, Rejoice at the progress of civilization, at the conquests of man over nature, and expect greater triumphs in a re-organized society; answer, The Roman ways, as wonderful for their times as are our railways for our day, served only to convey more rapidly from one extremity of the empire to another the listlessness and longing of man. The remedy for my malady does not lie in those outward things; I need something new. If they tell you, Abide by the faith of thy fathers without examination, follow the customs of their worship without criticising them, go to sleep upon the consecrated pillow where they found rest; answer, The trial of outward religions, of traditionary beliefs, is a thing of the past. We know what they avail in evil days. Great and earnest consolations consist neither in the multiplicity of ceremonies, nor in the rigor of external authority. Where are they, then, for I have need of them? Let that day only arrive when you shall utter this cry of distress. Let the day come when, wearied of groping your way, you shall be like the blind man of Jericho. Your God is not afar off. He is there, he waits for you. Fear not lest he pass before you without hearing your cry. You shall be disappointed in your hope no more than those who have gone before you; he has words as powerful as ever. When he shall have spoken to you, you will no longer grope in darkness; and instead of despairing seekers, you will become blessed believers. But this is on one condition,—that you do not suffer yourselves to be gained over by the unfeeling contentment of materialism, and that you recognize in the

general and special trials so abundantly furnished by this age, a compassionate purpose of God, who is not willing to cease smiting you till he shall have wounded your heart, like Jacob, in order to bless you. Happy those who weep, those who mourn; they shall be comforted, for between them and the Comforter there is no impassable obstacle.

No obstacle! Is not this saying too much? Between Jesus Christ and these poor souls there are too often Christians. In the narrative of the healing of blind Bartimeus, it is related that the disciples interposed for a moment between him and the Saviour. Is not this the part which believers to-day are often found playing? And first, there are men who, wrongfully setting themselves up as the only representatives of Christianity, regard it as their mission to constitute themselves intermediums between the poor blind men of our days and the divine Physician. They say to them, Go not to him; come to us. But they are not he. They possess neither his compassion nor his power; they are hard and narrow; and instead of truths, they present fables which appear to be gathered together from out the ruins of paganism. What a position! To place themselves between Christ and the sinner: to hide Jesus Christ in order to appear in his room! If there are still so great numbers of poor blind men who grope their way, ascribe it largely to these usurpers of the rights of God, who have his word only to hide it. Yes, in this country many sighs, many aspirations, fall back to the earth, because the priest has placed himself between souls and Jesus Christ, and has given himself as the incarnation of Christianity.

It is easy to understand that Christianity so represented should possess but small attractions.

But, in conclusion, let us turn to ourselves, my brethren, to us, evangelical Christians. We, too, we have discouraged many proselytes because we have shown a semi-Christianity, without life and without flame. The gospel is the same to-day as it was eighteen centuries since, if only, while inducing men to read it, we could at the same time make them see it as it rightly is. Would you know the secret of Paul's power in his preaching? It is not merely the doctrine which he proclaimed that constituted his strength; it is moreover the spirit in which he announced that doctrine. We have the doctrine, — not quite complete, however; often much contracted and impoverished; St. Paul's discourse at Athens projects beyond our theological systems in every direction. Yet in that which is essential we have the doctrine of salvation. Have we the spirit which animated Paul? Have we that ardent charity which consumed his heart? St. Luke shows him to us at Athens, sorrowfully traversing that city, and shuddering at the sight of the idolatrous altars with which it was filled. Paul beheld the heathen city with the same feelings that caused Jesus to weep his tears over Jerusalem. Read his heart, broken with holy sorrow, and you will comprehend that his speech, as Bossuet has said, founded more churches than Plato had disciples. That inward agony, that charity, those sufferings, — we have them not; and when we shall traverse the streets of our great city with hearts wounded like Paul's at Athens, then we also shall achieve a great work therein to the glory of Jesus Christ, and

the altar inscribed to the unknown God will not have been raised in vain in so many souls, who are waiting only for the approach of true Christians to recognize and adore the Saviour of the world. In these times of such solemn interest, and when men's spirits are so tried and searched, suffer it not to be said that there are disciples of Christ who have remained as obstacles between him and a sick and suffering people that were calling upon him. Nay, Lord, but may it be their only endeavor to lead souls to him who has the words of eternal life! Let nothing in our works or in our words keep them away from Christ! Make us wholly pure from our brother's blood!

CHAPTER V.

THE NATURE OF JESUS CHRIST, THE MAN-GOD.

"The Word was made flesh." — John i. 14.

THE desire for the Saviour had reached its complete maturity in the epoch of universal decline which we have endeavored to sketch with rapid strokes. Like fire smoldering beneath the wrecks of an edifice devoured by it, it lay smoldering and burning beneath the ruins of paganism and Judaism, and the flames could even be seen ascending to heaven triumphant over the entire world which it had consumed. To depict in a few words the posture of earnest minds at this memorable epoch, we could not do better than to borrow the noble and poetical language of Origen. He sees in the bride of the Song of songs awaiting her husband, the type of the human soul awaiting its Saviour; she was affianced to him by the promise given in Eden; she knows that his coming draweth nigh, and she calls upon him with inexpressible ardor. Origen makes us hear her voice, first in Judaism, then in paganism. "The church," says he, "by which I understand the assembly of the saints, desires its union with Christ. She thus expresses her desire: I have been loaded with good things; I have received abundantly the pledges of my

divine espousals. During my betrothal with the Son of the heavenly King, with the King of the whole creation, angels brought to me the law as a gift of my beloved. Prophets filled with the Holy Spirit did the more influence my love and awaken my holy desires, in speaking to me of his coming, of his countless virtues, and his unbounded gifts. They depicted to me his noble beauty and his compassions. So that I can not endure the longing awakened by such a love. Already the existing economy draws to its close. As yet I see only its servants ascending and descending the luminous ladder. I turn to thee, Father of my beloved, and I entreat thee to have pity on my love, and send him to me so that he shall no longer speak to me by his servants and his prophets only, but he shall come himself, and I shall hear him speaking and teaching."

But it is not in Judaism alone that the divine Spouse is called for; they cry out for him in the bosom of paganism also, according to Origen: "The human soul," he says,* "is profoundly desirous of being united to the Word, even among the pagans. She has received the earnest of her divine espousals. In like manner as the law and as prophecy were the pledges of the future for Israel, so the law of conscience, the understanding, and the free will, were for the human soul, out of the pale of Judaism, the presents of her betrothal. She has found in no doctrine of philosophers the satisfaction of her longing and of her love.† She seeks the illumination and the visitation of the

* Origen, *In Cantic. Cantic.*, lib. i.

† "*Plena atque profecta desiderii sui amoris expletio.*"

Word. Neither men nor angels suffice unto her. She desires the divine embraces of the Word." *

If such are the inclinations of humanity, is it not evident that the heavenly Spouse is about to descend from the skies? Who formed, who nourished, who unfolded this desire, save that God to whom the broken heart of man betakes itself? He has pursued no other end during so many centuries but to bring this desire to its maturity. And now that this great design is accomplished, should heaven be shut up and remain deaf to the universal prayer? No, no; anything is possible except such a refusal. I appeal to the numberless proofs of the divine love, to its patient and persevering toil during the period of preparation. The coming of the Saviour will not be delayed for a moment. Already the hymn of peace has resounded upon the plains of Bethlehem. He cometh, he cometh, as saith the song, or rather he hath already come. We can join ourselves to those shepherds and to those magi, the first-fruits of a Christian humanity, the former representing the chosen people, the latter the Gentiles; we also can offer him myrrh and frankincense, and, above all, the treasures of our hearts. We can adore him in the manger. But in order to adore him in that humiliation, we must first of all discern his divinity in his humanity; and it is this important theme which I come now to propose for your meditation, to which I am also invited by the words of my text: "The Word was made flesh."

Doubtless there are found in this assembly men who refuse to believe in the perfect divinity of Christ,

* "*Ipsius oscula verbi Dei.*"

and others who detract from his perfect humanity. At all times this twofold tendency is encountered. Those who deny or diminish the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ continue, or rather revive, paganism, which ever sought to humanize the divine. Those who deny or diminish the perfect humanity of Jesus Christ prolong or revive Judaism, which separated the divine from the human, and placed between earth and heaven the high and terrible barrier of Sinai. Christianity is the definitive religion, precisely because it has reconciled without changing the divine and the human. It is the religion of the *Man-God*. To deny in Jesus Christ the man or the God, is to take away from Christianity the reason of its existence. It is, in fact, to blot it out; for it might then be said, "To what good end is a new religion which is but a pale reflection of an ancient religion? It was not worth the trouble to shake heaven and earth, and to tell them to keep silence, in order to repeat that which was already known. The question here relates, therefore, to the very essence of the gospel; and, since the gospel is the good news of salvation, it relates to the most indispensable condition of that salvation. May God grant me to convince those who doubt, and to confirm in their faith those who believe in the perfect divinity and the perfect humanity of their Saviour! We are every day gathering up the fruits of this great doctrine; but we do not sufficiently contemplate it in itself. The abundant and precious fruits which it gives appear to us to hide, at times, the tree which produces them. And yet there is found rich edification in considering these sublime

truths. Like the lofty mountains, they contain the freshest springs. May we now have a practical proof of this in meditating upon our text, which is at once so profound and so concise. This great subject of the nature of Jesus Christ is the burning bush of the new covenant. May it inspire us with the holy reverence which in the desert filled the man who was under the law, and with that filial confidence, also, which pertains to the man who is under grace!

A child is just born in a small city of a small country. This child is called Saviour, and this name announces all that which he comes to do here below. Whoever you are in this assembly, you admit, at least to a certain extent, that he brought to the world a great deliverance. But what ideas have you concerning his person? What is he in your eyes? To solve the great question of the nature of Jesus Christ, I shall first pass in review the different solutions which have been given by men who do not receive the gospel, and in order to refute them I shall not appeal to revelation so much as to themselves. It will suffice for me to bring each one of these solutions near to the heart of man, to his mysterious and infinite desire for salvation, and those doctrines will be consumed by his unsatisfied ardor, as straw by the fire.

What have men said to you of Christ? They have told you, perhaps, that there never lived a man like unto him; that he is only a mythical or fabulous personage, such as Linus or Orpheus; that the gospel is a brilliant tissue of legends, proceeding from the popular superstitions. In reality, their view is that Jesus Christ is but the symbol of our divinity, — the di-

vinity of all men; of that union of God and man which is to be realized in each one of us by the development of reason. Have they thus spoken to you? Nothing is more likely to occur, for the schools of unbelief have shaken their doubt into the air which we breathe, and the impiety of pretended wise men runs through our streets. I shall not refute this absurd opinion by presenting the imposing mass of historical testimonies which guarantee the reality of the facts stated by the evangelists. I shall not recall those well-known citations from Jewish and pagan writers who, by their very hatred, established the verity of the sacred narrative. I shall not speak of the blood of the apostles, poured out for that which is now styled a myth,—a fact incredible alike with regard to executioners and victims on the supposition of cotemporary rationalism. Legends and dreams inspire neither so great fury nor so great devotedness. I confine myself to an appeal to the human soul. Is it to find a myth, a felicitous legend, a well-invented apologue, that thou hast endured such sufferings and groanings, and sought out so many things, in every clime and in every age? What! in guerdon of so much toil and pain thou hast been pursuing the poetical expression of a truth which was already the heritage of every generation! If man by virtue of his reason is the true Christ, why has he desired another? What import has the history of religions? What mean the restlessness and the agitation of our hearts? It seems to us that to state these questions is to solve them.

What further has been said to you concerning Christ? Perhaps you have been assured that he was

a great social reformer, and that the gospel was the charter of a new society. Too long and too commonly has this idea been found in our poor world for it to escape your knowledge. I need not recall to your minds the deeply spiritual nature of the gospel,—those words of the Master, so often repeated, in which he turns man's eye from earth to heaven: "My kingdom is not of this world. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things shall be added unto you. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;"—words which represent every outward reform as dependent upon a moral and inward reform. Here, again, I shall appeal to the desire of your hearts. Do you believe that it would be completely satisfied by social reforms? Take things at the very best: let us suppose the earth no longer covetous of any man's daily bread, and that it be covered with harvests a thousand-fold more abundant. Let us suppose, to use the poetic image of the Psalmist, that the chariot of the year has distilled plenty upon all,—and God grant it! we are here combating only materialism; suppose that there are no starving people at the gate of the rich man, but that, seated in his turn at home, at a magnificent table, and clothed in fine linen, surrounded by a society that is perfectly leveled, the poor man, now no longer such, displays the extent of the social advancement that has been achieved. Let us suppose this to be the only work of Christ, and that it is completely successful. Do you believe that all aspiration is at an end, that all desire is extinguished in you? Ah! you have a better opin-

ion of human nature. You do not despise it to that degree. You know well that it would rush forth beyond time as out of a prison-house, beyond the earth as out of a place of exile, because it lives not by bread alone, but pre-eminently by truth. You know that on the morrow of the fortunate day we have painted, the void would be yet greater in the heart of the poor rich man, because an infinite void, the emptiness of one that has lost God, painfully measures itself by that which has been thrown into it to make it full. No, no; it is not for that only that during six thousand years all creatures have sighed. Each one of these immortal souls feels within itself that the whole world — were it the world transformed according to the most beautiful dreams of social reformers — is not equal to itself in real work; and that if the Christ of eighteen centuries ago was but a reformer, for time and for earth, it must then be constrained to seek another, and to feel that the true deliverer is yet to come!

You have heard it also said, that Jesus of Nazareth was a sage, a philosopher, the Socrates of Jerusalem. I shall not adduce the miraculous and mysterious character of his life and his teaching, which transports us from the domain of theories into the domain of sovereign reality. I can appeal again to the desire of your hearts. Is it a sage, a philosopher, whom you need? But did not the ancient world have more of these even than they asked for? Did they not possess the purest, the greatest, the most admirable of all, and yet the ancient world would not abide in their schools? Of the East they sought something powerful and new;

and do you believe that when the East had given them some more elevated moral notions, they would have withdrawn satisfied? What! a new disputer, a man of supposition, of hypotheses, presenting himself with a system flowing from preceding systems, — would this be the Saviour, the Deliverer? But have you not understood that it is for certainty, for a certainty immediate, absolute, which should be like a sight of the invisible, that man is athirst? He has heard discoursers, rhetoricians, and philosophers enough. He has sufficiently agitated ideas, stated questions, and tried doctrines; the old world — and in this respect we all belong to it — could no longer bear their wearisomeness. Man hungers after beliefs. He hungers for God, and you would set before him the unsubstantial dishes with which he is profoundly disgusted. He thirsts for consolation, and you lead him to the broken and ruined cistern of human knowledge. Give him the bread and the water which he asks for. Give him his God, his living God. If you give it not to him, if your Christ does not bring it to him, he must then go in search of another. Shall this other Christ be a prophet, the divinest of all, as men have perhaps told you? A prophet does not suffice; and the proof is that the greatest among them were those who most ardently desired the Saviour: did not he who, according to Jesus Christ, was both the last and the first of the prophets, declare that he was not worthy to unloose the latchet of his shoes? A prophet? But he is a man, one of us; one of us purified and chosen to be the organ of the Spirit; one of us sanctified by the live coal which touched the lips of Isaiah; one of us lifted up to the contemplation

of unspeakable things ; but, after all, one of us diseased, also, with the great malady of sin, under the like condemnation with us ; but it is not one partaking of the same disease who shall be our physician. No, you need more than a prophet, and therefore, after Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, the Jews have still waited for Him who was to come.

Shall it be an angel, the one nearest to the throne of God, the most glorious of all ? I need not repeat to you the words of a sacred writer, " To which of the angels has he said, Sit thou upon thy throne ?" Heb. i. 5. I shall only recall to your minds that expression so true and beautiful which Origen has given to the desire of our hearts : " I have only seen hitherto " — he represents the soul as saying — " thy angels descending and ascending the luminous ladder. Take pity on my love, O Father ! Let my beloved speak to me no more by his servants ; let him come himself ; let him speak to me himself." If we experience so profound a need of seeing the Son of God without intervention of another, of seeing him, of hearing him in person, what have we to do with the creature ? It is the eternal Word whom we need. If an angel could have been Christ, Mary would have acknowledged him in Gabriel ; but the angel, like Mary, spoke of the promised Saviour, because he had not yet come. The angels could celebrate his birth, but no one of them could have filled his place. Humanity knew his servants ; it aspired to the possession of the Master.

Thus it suffices us, in order to detect the inadequacy of such opinions, to confront these false views with the secret and burning desire of our hearts. But let

us rise from these somewhat vague notions to that desire for salvation which we have found in our analysis; we shall quickly be convinced that man asked for nothing less than that which God has given him; that is to say, a Saviour uniting in himself the nature of God and the nature of man. I do not fear to place myself upon this ground, for I find an admirable harmony between the holy desire enkindled for salvation and the positive prophecies destined to render it pure and fruitful. When the true cry of the soul went up to God, that cry asked for a God-man. Whenever the soul has spoken with simplicity and with freedom, without being chained or chilled by a captious philosophy, it has desired an incarnate Redeemer. This desire was often enveloped in gross and impure myths, but it proves irresistibly that the incarnation alone responds to the desire of man, and that by denying this stupendous miracle violence is done as well to his nature as to revelation.

And truly, my brethren, what have we constantly found in the desire for salvation? Two feelings, fully discriminated, — grief on account of condemnation, and the hope of restoration. The hope of renewal is at bottom, the hope of finding God again, and of possessing him. It is he, and he alone, whom man has sought in religion after religion. And observe carefully that man has no concern with the solitary and idle deity of philosophy, who is lost in the depths of the heavenly solitudes, like an Oriental monarch in the seclusion of his palace. No, he longs for a living God: he desires a God intermingled with all existence. Man has wretchedly debased the divinity by cutting it

into fragments, and dragging it, thus mutilated and degraded, in the dust of the material world, which appropriated to itself in some sort the severed pieces: the tree, the flower, the vast sea, the fresh fountain, the sun, the wind, the golden corn, all beings, all elements, were deified, and there was no act of life that had not some presiding deity. Say that these are odious superstitions, and we agree with you; but you must admit that a true sentiment is wrapped up in them, though, alas for it, defiled by contact with them. "I need a God who is nigh, a God who speaks to me, who leads me." This man has never ceased repeating in all the religions invented by him. "Make us gods which shall go before us" (Ex. xxxii. 1, 2), said the Jews to Aaron. This simple word is uttered by all the paganisms of the ancient world. Materialistic in one aspect, it is true in another. Man can not do without a real God, and he will believe in his restoration only when he shall have seen God go before him in his sorrowful pathway. He has always sought, outside of the religion of the true God, to draw nigh to the Divinity, to become united to it, to renew the bonds broken between the Divinity and himself, and to possess it in very truth. We have the strongest evidence that it was not sufficient for him to adore the Divinity in the heavens afar off, but that he ardently desired that heaven should bow down and thus draw nigh to the earth. The saints of the old covenant, the worshipers of the one and the holy God, were not satisfied with their condition. They wanted more than that which they had, as was shown by their look constantly directed onward; and they cried out, by the mouth of one of their number,

"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, the living God." Ps. xlii. 1, 2. Endeavor not, then, to content a heart that has felt such longings with a Saviour who shall be less than God.

We have just been contemplating the incarnation with special reference to its divine aspect: its human side, the perfect humanity of the Redeemer, his humanity humiliated, suffering, crucified, is equally the object of our desires. Hope is preceded by the grief of condemnation. This sorrow withers the heart of man; envelops life in the vail of God's wrath. The weight of his sins crushes him. In vain flatter him, in vain soothe his pride, he feels that he belongs to a fallen and accursed race. It is in vain that he tastes of pleasure; the gnawing worm, the worm that dies not, is in the fruit. It is in vain that he darts forth eagerly into external activity, and becomes an orator or a warrior, and covers himself with glory; he does not escape from a gloomy fear of death, or an intense disrelish for life. He knows that for him the present life is desolate, the future life fearful, for he is dependent upon an offended and angry God. Oh, how he longs to appease him! He takes the fairest fruits of his fields and places them upon the altar, but he returns from it troubled as before. Sometimes he takes the most prized, the firstlings of his flocks. He multiplies sacrifices, he offers even hecatombs of victims. The Deity is not appeased. A human propitiation is needed, for the entire race feels itself to be guilty before God. The privations which man undergoes in order to offer sacrifices are thoroughly inadequate. Therefore he will

hesitate no longer; oh, sight of horror! he will take his child, he will take his brother. He will sacrifice them without pity, provided only that God be appeased. But he is not appeased, for the victim was defiled. The lamb or the sheep without blemish were indeed pure offerings, but were not human. The human sacrifice is not a pure sacrifice. There must then be found a sacrifice at once spotless and human. And it is such a sacrifice which from altar to altar is implored with tears and blood in supplications to that heaven which is still shut up.

Those who wish to remove from the Saviour the idea of sacrifice, and see in him only the revealer of divine love, forget these terrible manifestations of conscience, which though erring is also sovereign, and smitten with a cruel madness in its burning but mistaken thirst for redemption. They have not beheld those bloody altars which would re-appear to-morrow if the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world were removed from our eyes,—altars which rise everywhere when he is not known. Doubtless this longing, this need of the conscience, is at once purified and satisfied by the gospel; but no ingenious theory shall tear it from the gospel; and we have the right to say, It is not only a God of glory, it is a God-man; it is an atoning sacrifice for which lost man cries out; and as long as he shall not find it will he seek for it. If Christianity gives it not to him, he will go farther. Lo! these many ages has he sighed after the incarnation, the incarnation as connected with the redeeming sacrifice, and he will not be satisfied with less.

This also was the thing promised to him. His de-

sire is but the inward promise, as the promise is but the divine sanction of his desire. I shall not repeat the elucidations I have given of the prophecies under the old dispensation. Let it suffice to say that Isaiah, who described the Saviour beforehand as the Counselor, the Wonderful, the Son of the Most High, called him, at the same time, the man of sorrow, the despised, the slain lamb. Thus ancient prophecy acknowledged in his person man and God, the victim and the king. Was not the incarnation implicitly enfolded in the first prophecy? Was not that seed of the woman which should crush the serpent, that very humanity, fully assimilated by God? and did not the wound inflicted by the serpent figuratively set forth, in a wonderful way, the reality of an incarnation reaching even to suffering and to death?

Both man and God, the Saviour ought then to be, as declared alike by the promises of heaven and the desires of earth. Was he this? In other words, Has the Saviour come? Such is the question which is settled by our text: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

We know that the heart of man seeks not less, and that God has not promised less. Let us now consider the fulfillment of the desire and the realization of this promise, agreeably to the invitation contained in these few words which comprehend the whole Christian scheme. "The Word was made flesh:" what does this mean, if not that antecedently to its becoming flesh it existed in God? The divinity of Jesus Christ is not, then, merely a virtue that has gone out from God, and comes to animate a human body, resembling a sunbeam

shot forth at a given moment. No: the Word existed as a personal being before the incarnation. Let no one charge us here with composing a scholastic theology. The eternal divinity of the Word, of the Son of God, is an indispensable condition of salvation. If the divinity of Jesus Christ consisted only in a divine virtue, in a divine influence, it would have nothing special, nothing absolutely distinctive. We all receive more or less of divine influences. The divinity of Jesus Christ might then be spoken of as ours might be spoken of, admitting only that the divine influence was stronger in his case than in ours. When men deny the pre-existence, the eternity, of the Word that became incarnate in Jesus Christ, they deny his divinity in the biblical sense. To continue speaking of his divinity is to play with words, is to escape the indignation of the Christian conscience by equivocal language; it is to be wanting in sincerity. The God whom we need is the God of the heavens, for he it is whom we have lost. The incarnation has no other end than to re-instate us in communion with him, and this it accomplishes only if the incarnate Word is verily the eternal Word.

This is not all; there is involved not only the reality of our salvation, but also the knowledge of the true God. "He that hath not the Son hath not the Father." The true God, that God who is free, living, and holy, is the God whose name was declared by St. John when he wrote in his First Epistle "God is love." A God who is not love, who loveth not, is a God who is dead, a God who is not a God. Inclosed within his almightiness as in a desert, he would be but the icy and inapprehensible shadow of Divinity. And how

could God be from all eternity a God of love, if he had no person to love? Will you say that from all eternity he could have multiplied his creatures? Beware! that is identifying the Creator with the creature; it is taking from him the freedom of creative power; it is rendering the creature the necessary complement of his being; it is binding God to the world, like a slave to his chain; it is opening the abyss of pantheism! Where, then, will you find the perfect object of his eternal love,—where, except in himself? Where, if not in that Speech, in that Word which is God, and which yet is distinct from him, since the apostle tells us that it was with God? The Son gives us the Father. Through him we acknowledge and we adore the eternal love; and, seeing love grounded in the very being of God, we understand that it is the law of the universe. The Word was at the beginning the brightness, the enstamped image of the Divine Glory, and, above all, the object of his love. The only Son, says St. John, was in the bosom of the Father; sublime and touching expression, which discloses to us in eternity that which love possesses of holiest and tenderest, and which alone enables us to measure the extent of the redeeming Sacrifice! He who sees the divinity of Jesus Christ only in his holiness does not comprehend the entire scope of his sacrifice. He is moved when he sees Jesus beaten, outraged, and immolated; but what would he then feel, if he should say within himself, It is from the bosom of the Father that he descended to the garden of Gethsemane, to the governor's hall, and even to the cross! it is the only Son of the Father who is thus trodden under

foot! and it is the Father who delivered him up to shame for a rebellious race! Oh love of the Son! love of the Father! profound abysses of love! We are not angels; and if they can not discern your depths, how shall it be with us? We must be silent and adore. Word that wast made flesh, we adore thee in the bosom of the Father, in the eternity where thou reignedst antecedently to the existence of a single creature! Even to that hight we must ascend to comprehend thy humiliation and thy immolation.

The Word that was made flesh was eternal: such is the first lesson contained in our text. Another it gives us which is very precious, in setting forth the living character of God's revelations. Speech is the revelation of our souls. The Word of God is in like manner his revelation. It is not with God's Word as with ours. Our soul manifests itself through words which vanish away immediately after having vibrated in the air, whose pulsations they have stirred. The Word of God is not a word which passes away when once pronounced. A fearful revelation of the living and eternal God, it is living and eternal as he is. It is not a bare collection of a few words; it is a personal being, an enstamped image of the Father, the very brightness of his glory. Thus each saying of the living Word is a work which possesses life like itself. God has spoken in eternity, and this Word is the only Son of the Father, God like himself. He has spoken in time, and of this Word creation was the echo. "All things were made by him." "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." He has spoken in revelation, and this Word is not simply a doctrine, it is a

magnificent reality; each of its syllables was a fact: now the election of Israel, now the law, now prophecy in its majestic whole, and now great miracles. Finally, the Word has spoken in redemption, and this Word was the greatest of all events; it was the Incarnation. It was made flesh, our text declares. It poured itself in all its fullness into a human soul; it lived there, it loved there; in that life and death it manifested itself, and men could say of it, that it "hath dwelt among us." Thus, whether we consider it in the heavens, whether we consider it on the earth, the Word of God is always living. This distinguishes it from the word of men; this constitutes its sovereign power. It is not a system, were it the most perfect of all systems; it is a living reality throughout all ages, it is a manifestation rather than a demonstration. A revelation which is an incarnation becomes palpable, evident to the simplest minds; and we can say with an apostle, "That which we have seen with our eyes, that which our hands have touched, that declare we unto you." And truly humanity had great need of such a revelation. She had in her anticipations the germ of the Word; she had it as a floating idea; the incarnation alone could impart it to her in its healthful power. It was not the matter of chief importance to overthrow a false doctrine, for in order to accomplish that it would have been sufficient to put in its place a true doctrine; but the object was to destroy the works of sin. A great work of God was therefore necessary. It was necessary to vanquish the power of darkness present upon the earth. The presence of the power of love thus became indispensa-

ble. The word of hell, a word of revolt and of pride, had become incorporate in humanity, had been made flesh, was becoming incarnate every day. The Word of heaven was equally to become incarnate. Thus our text, having first brought before our minds the eternity of the Word, instructs us with regard to the method of his revelations,—living revelations, because they are perfect and effectual.

The apostle John does not expatiate concerning even the fact of the incarnation. He is content to state it without defining it; because it evades every attempt at reducing it to a formula. It comprehends an unfathomable mystery. The gospel reveals it to us; it declares to us how, by his miraculous birth, Jesus Christ was removed from the defilement of original sin. It constantly affirms that he is the son of man and the Son of God. It goes no further. Why has not its wise reserve been oftener imitated? With how many difficulties has the theology of men hedged about this great doctrine! Some have endeavored, as if with a line, to measure precisely the sphere of divinity and the sphere of humanity in Christ Jesus. They have sought to tell exactly where the human or where the divine begins and ends. They have succeeded in chilling devotion, and in removing from the person of Christ its living unity, by the very efforts which aimed to circumscribe his human or his divine nature within appropriate limits. This division of Christ's being into fragments has often resulted in a complete duality. Thus, in the writings of some of the fathers, his divinity is in such a manner separated from his humanity, that, according to them, the for-

mer is present at his passion, like any unmoved spectator. In these theological speculations there is something false, strained, and cold, which was unknown to the great apostolic age. We are satisfied with that which satisfied it.* God, says St. Paul, was manifested in the flesh; the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily in Christ. We conclude from these words, that the divine and the human nature profoundly interpenetrate each other in the Redeemer. We ought to add that divinity, in uniting itself with condemned humanity, vails its luster. Jesus Christ, says St. Paul again, being equal with God, humbled himself; he took on him the form of a servant. This humiliation is free and voluntary, and consequently it could not be derogatory to the dignity of the divine nature.

Let us take heed, also, not to detract from the humanity of Jesus Christ. It is not less needful to our salvation than his divinity. The incarnate Word was in reality the second Adam; the lost race of man had desired him, had called for him; and so well had he represented them, that in fighting for them against Satan he had been fighting for himself; and, according to the beautiful image of one of the fathers, he was like a man who defends his own hearth or his native land.†

* We need scientific development of truth in one age and another, to meet and satisfy the real and successively manifested wants of the intellect of the church in the different eras of its existence, and the different periods of its growth on the earth. The cultivated and orderly mind craves this, grasps it, and will be satisfied with nothing short of truth in its scientific form, and in the rounded fullness and completeness of system. There is in every age of the church an irrepressible stress and urgency in this direction; it must be gratified; nor is it in any way incompatible with the purest spiritual life and joy. — Tr.

† "*Erat homo pro fratribus certans.*" Irenæus, p. 284.

He was then pre-eminently the man, whilst he was one with the Father; and thus was he enabled to complete the redemptive sacrifice upon the cross, bringing nigh the heart of man to God, and the heart of God to man. Let us be satisfied with recognizing the oneness of the divine and the human nature in him, and have a mystery so great and so unspeakable sheltered from our subtile distinctions. For ourselves, we fully accept the beautiful saying of Irenæus: "The Word of God became man in order to accustom man to receive God, and God to dwell in man." * We know not a more sublime paraphrase of the language of St. John: "The Word was made flesh."

And now that we have considered the great doctrine of the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ in itself, and have perceived that it alone responds to the promises and the revelation of God, and also to the needs of our hearts, let us rapidly survey some of the proofs by which, in our view, this doctrine is victoriously established. And first, the history of Jesus Christ at every one of its phases exhibits to us divinity and humanity closely united in his person. Go back to his advent into our world. See this little child lying in its swaddling-clothes in the manger, resembling all new-born babes, feeble, frail like them, poorer than the poorest: that is the man. But what rays of glory surround him! The armies of the skies have sung his birth, the very stars have declared it, and wise men were seen coming from the East to worship him: that is the God. He submitted himself to the conditions

* "*Verbum filius hominis factus est ut assuescerit Deum habitare in homine.*" Iren., p. 289.

of slow and gradual development pertaining to our nature, and an evangelist could say of him, that he increased in stature and in grace. He also has passed through that first period of human life, at once so humiliating and so touching, in which thought and language are unfolded step by step: that is the man. From his tenderest years his holiness was disclosed by means of his gentle and complete obedience to his parents. At twelve years of age, in the temple, he confounded the judges and the doctors of the law at Jerusalem, and revealed his perfect communion with his Father: that is the God.

He has no place where to lay his head. He traverses the villages of Judæa and Samaria, and men see him sit down wearied with his journey. He is hungry, he is athirst; he falls under the weight of his cross; the reeds of the soldiers cover his face with blood; his body is torn by the nails as he hangs upon the tree: this is the man. But at the same time he lords it over nature; he speaks to the waves of the sea, and they are calmed; he touches the blind man, and his eyes are opened; he speaks a word to the paralytic, and he rises and walks: that is God. His sorrows throng and multiply upon him; he is finally cut off by the strength of his anguish; he dies: that is the man. But he had already spoken as a master to death; the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow, the brother of Martha and Mary, had been raised by him from the dead. He will himself break the bonds of the grave, and break them for all: and this reveals the God.

If we pass from the domain of the outward to that of the spiritual life, the divinity and humanity of the

Saviour are apparent in like manner. He knew the pains of loneliness, and those of mourning. He groaned within himself at the death of Lazarus. "Jesus wept," says the evangelist: that is the man. This same Jesus dried up the tears of the afflicted with the most powerful consolations; men came to him smiting their breasts, and went from him with thanksgivings upon their lips: that is the God. He was tempted by Satan; he underwent contact with him in the desert; he heard his treacherous words, like the first Adam in the garden of Eden: and in this we behold the man. But with three words of Scripture, as with three sharp arrows, he pierced the tempter; and at the end of his course he could rightfully say, "Satan has nothing in me:" this is the God. He passed through the harrowing anguish that pertains to the combats of the soul; drops of sweat were seen upon his brow; he lay in the dust of Gethsemane. "This Jesus," we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death." Heb. v. 7. This is the man. But scarcely had he risen up from his prayer, scarcely had he pronounced the words of supreme obedience, "Father, thy will be done," when, on the morrow of that terrible day of his suffering, the impious troop of his enemies fall, smitten to the earth at his feet, not being able to endure the brightness of the holiness and the love which shine out from his whole being: this is the God. He was brought to judgment; he was condemned: herein we see the man. With sovereign power he pardoneth sins: herein he is the God.

His last is his most mysterious conflict. Bearing the condemnation of a world, he cries out, "Father, Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" this is the man. And at the same moment he pronounces the great "It is finished:" this is the God. Do not forget, my brethren, that that which we have exhibited to you as distinct and separate was one in the unity of life in Jesus Christ, and confess with us that from first to last the gospel history has been but a commentary upon our text, "The Word was made flesh."

Jesus Christ himself had perpetual consciousness of his divine and human nature. He represented himself to be the son of man and the Son of God; he declared that he was sent into the world by the Father to save those who should believe on him. He commanded his disciples to baptize repenting sinners in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, thus placing himself by the side of God in respect to the solemn act which symbolizes the work of conversion. He especially insisted upon his oneness with the Father, in his last conversations with his disciples, when he was opening the depth of his heart to them, and when he was communicating to them his highest teachings, in the most touching form, on that solemn evening of his lonely and bloody conflict. He did not fear to say to them, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I and the Father are one." He commanded his followers to pray in his name, and he makes their holiness depend on their union with him: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Not only did he thus instruct his disciples, but he suffered his enemies to ac-

cuse him of making himself equal with God. He did not protest against the accusation; he remained silent even under the sentence of condemnation. To keep silence under such circumstances was to admit the accusation, was to acknowledge the truth of the facts alleged. If the accusation was false, it was needful at all hazards to speak. It was not allowable for him not to justify himself, for it is never allowable to suffer a wrong to be committed when it can be prevented. It is evident, therefore, that Jesus Christ had a clear consciousness of his divinity.

The apostolical church did not cease to proclaim it. She attributed the same works to Jesus Christ as to God: participation in the creation and government of the world; the resurrection of the dead and the judgment; the government of the church, which presupposes omnipotence and omniscience. More than this: the primitive church positively adored Jesus Christ; "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," exclaimed the first martyr at the moment of his suffering. The apostolical church invoked him as her Lord and her God. She declared that every knee should bow unto him. There is, then, plainly no middle position; either the church rightfully acknowledged his perfect divinity, or she fell into gross idolatry. The church of the apostles and martyrs idolatrous! There are some suppositions which one is ashamed to state.

From all these considerations it results that if there exists any doctrine established by the most irrefragable testimonies, it is the doctrine of the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ. With it would fall Christianity as a whole, and that which would be preserved

out of it would no longer be worth speaking of. Wherever this truth has been impaired, the very foundations of religion have been shaken. All has been vacillating, and the energetic efforts of the church to re-establish this "corner-stone" have manifested in all ages her conviction that her preservation and her progress were inseparably connected with the triumph of this doctrine.

You, then, who from different points of view do not admit this doctrine, ought not to practice any illusion upon yourselves; you are exhibiting yourselves as the destroyers of Christianity. There are those among you who accept this position; they must suffer us to ask them on behalf of what interest? What is the motive which impels you to reject the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ? Is it on God's behalf? Is it for man's sake? On God's behalf, you will perhaps reply, as might be inferred from that name of deist, to which really you have so little claim. A deist, according to the etymology of the word, ought to defend the cause of God more zealously than all other men; but, in this sense, no one is less so than you. We have shown you what God would be without the eternal Word; the Father without the Son ceases to be the Father. Instead of the living God, of the God whose name is love, whose bowels are moved with compassion toward us, who speaks to us and delivers us, you give us a God separated, remote, hard, and inflexible, who cares no more for our world than we for the leaf which our hand has cast to the wind. You give us a phantom in the place of a reality. We know not where to find your God, and we know that, if we should succeed in

finding him, he has neither a word of love, nor any deliverance reserved for us. He has never dried one tear, or rejoiced one heart, not even yours. Because you have a dry heart, you are pleased to make a God arid and cold like yourselves; and you declare yourselves to be above all men the followers of God! You have calumniated him in representing him as unfeeling as you are, and, far from serving his cause, you would have injured it for ever if men had believed you on your word, for humanity will never be satisfied with a mute and inactive Deity. Will you pretend that his greatness would be tarnished if he should concern himself with our poor race to the extent of consenting to the incarnation of his Son? You place greatness then solely in outward glory, and you have never understood that there is an order of greatness vastly superior to this; namely, the greatness of charity. In this point of view nothing is more beautiful, nothing is more worthy of God, than the voluntary humiliation of his love on behalf of a feeble creation. The more feeble the being, the greater seems that love which saved him. Speak not to us, therefore, of your concern for God's glory. Once more, "He that hath not the Son hath not the Father."

Will you speak to us of your interest on man's behalf? But do you not then know that his conscience has never asked for anything besides that which God has given him? Will you claim to be better informed than the human conscience, speaking through six thousand years? How is it that you do not perceive that in taking away Christ as God, you take water from the soul's burning thirst, bread from its consuming hunger,

you mock its long-cherished aspirations? Without pausing to consider humanity in general, I will inquire of you, Are you contented with your doctrine? does it satisfy you? Has it cheered you in your days of sadness? Have you need of nothing? You will not dare to say that you have need of nothing. You will not venture to say this, whatever be your illusions, for you have need of all things, and this all is brought to us by the Saviour, the Deliverer, alone, in giving us God.

There are other men who deny the divinity of Jesus Christ while pretending at the same time to remain Christians. They must learn that this intermediate position is not possible. In the first place, it is not an intermediate position. Their homage to Jesus Christ covers a terrible charge which they aim against him; they accuse him of lying and of hypocrisy. Is it true, yes or no, that Jesus Christ declared his divinity? If it is clearer than the light that he represented himself as the Son of God, it is equally clear that to deny his divinity is to proclaim him a liar in the face of the world. It avails nothing to say, with a philosopher, "The morality of the gospel touches me and penetrates me." If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, the gospel ought to be torn in pieces as an imposture. Jesus Christ spoke falsely all his life. He deceived his disciples the last night he spent with them. He knowingly suffered his adversaries to commit a fearful crime, which by a word he could have caused them to shun. Let men speak no more of his holiness, of his moral purity! We are obliged to say that in a sense the Jews and Pilate condemned him justly. Do

thou forgive these words, O Lord! It pains us to utter them; forgive them for the sake of the object at which we are aiming, and that is, to tear off the vail from those pretended friends of the gospel who think to love thee while accusing thee of imposture. Perhaps they will be affrighted at the thought of the blasphemy hidden beneath their denial; perhaps, when they find it impossible to see an impostor in the humble Jesus of Nazareth, in the meek and lowly Master, in the victim resigned and compassionate up to the hour of his suffering, they will fall at thy feet, and cry out, "If it be absolutely true that he was either a cheat or a God, we can not hesitate; yes, that man was God!"

Let all those who are tempted to detract from the divinity of Christ weigh well these considerations. Let them consider that on the day when the church shall feel herself attacked anew upon this vital point, though it were by the most seductive mysticism, her voice, her mighty voice, which has no need of councils to make itself heard, will sound forth as formerly in the days of Arius or of Socinus. The most terrible of all excommunications for a doctrine is this cry of terror and indignation on the part of the church when assailed in the person of her divine Bridegroom, and crying out, like the women of Jerusalem, "I seek for my Saviour, and I know not where they have laid him." Ah! may the old rationalism, now passing away, experience no revival under more specious forms! Quickly would its true character be discerned, and it would be but the dead burying the dead.

To you, Christians, is chiefly confided the care of preserving this glorious doctrine. Doctrines are set

forth in confessions of faith; but they may sleep there. They are truly preserved only by a living faith. Men doubt at our side concerning the human and divine nature of Jesus Christ: let us show forth that which we find in him of consolation, strength, and blessedness. Jesus Christ was a man like unto us, tried in all things, except sin: let us then go to him with perfect freedom, sure of his compassion. We tread no path in life where we do not find his footsteps. Are we walking in the rough pathway of poverty? He passed there before us. Are we in the road of suffering? He has preceded us. Are we exposed to opprobrium? Who of us shall be insulted as he was? Do we weep for one dearly beloved? "I, too, have wept," he seems to say unto us. And, finally, do we reach the gloomy and rough valley of death? He knows its loneliness and its anguish. "He was made like unto his brethren in all things, that he might be a merciful high priest." Heb. ii. 17. But this brother in toils, in conflict, and in sorrow, is at the same time the mighty God. In him we are more than conquerors. If Satan and the world unite against him, we are certain of gaining the victory. It has been already gained by him. His glory shall be our glory. The past is blotted out, the present is transformed, and the future is radiant with hope; for the God-man died for our offenses, rose again for our justification, and ascended up to heaven to prepare a place for us, being always present in the midst of us by his Spirit to direct his people, and to strengthen the poor Christian bending under his daily cross. Ah! may he, as long as he lives in this body, live in an ever strengthening faith in his Redeem-

er's humanity and divinity: by the former, assured of his Redeemer's tender sympathy; by the latter, of his effectual help; and by both, of eternal salvation. Here on earth may he raise that song, which he shall finish and repeat in heaven with angels and saints: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing! Unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, be blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, for ever and ever!" Rev. v. 12, 13.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PLAN OF JESUS CHRIST.

"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." — Matt. v. 17.

IN our last discourse we considered the nature of Jesus Christ. We confessed and adored in his person the God-man. To-day we inquire, not what he was, but what did he come to do upon the earth? what was his plan? That Jesus Christ had a well-settled plan follows from his declarations and from his whole life. How many times did he not speak of the work which he had come to accomplish! "Father, I have finished," he said, the evening before his death, — "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." What a wonderful unity in his ministry! It is animated by one and the same thought, from the first day until the last. He marched onward toward the end which he had prescribed to himself, without a single deviation from his course, in the very straightest path, knowing no rest and no recreation. Not one act of his can be cited which was not the rigorous result of his plan. And yet there is nothing constrained in him; he does not resemble those men who are imprisoned in their idea as in a vise. We feel that the plan of Jesus Christ is in some sort incorporated with him; he is so deeply imbued with it that everything in his life is connected

with it in the most natural and spontaneous manner. He moves with freedom within the limits which he has traced for himself. His discourses and his works flow from a living spring, without calculation and without premeditation. How, then, could the charge possibly be made against Jesus Christ, that he had not formed a plan which was single and special?

Some rationalists have affirmed that he devised a plan, at first, which failed, and that he then devised another entirely different. In this view, the first plan of Jesus Christ was to restore the kingdom of Judah with great splendor, and to confer new glory upon the Jewish theocracy. With this design, as they think, he announced in the synagogue at Nazareth the acceptable year of the Lord; but not finding the expected favor and aid, he modified his plan; and instead of announcing the acceptable year, he proclaims that the kingdom of God belongs to those who weep. Thus he is regarded as falling back upon a spiritual kingdom, in despair of his object. But how explain the fact in accordance with this supposition of unbelief, that even before entering upon his active ministry Jesus Christ had indignantly rejected in the desert the suggestions of Satan, all of which sought to materialize his work? How explain that one of the first sayings addressed to his disciples related to his death? "Destroy this temple," said he unto them, "and in three days I will raise it up." "But," says the evangelist John, "he spake of the temple of his body." We shall not attempt to refute in detail an objection to which history palpably gives the lie. There is, moreover, one fact which rises above all

others; it is the fact of the divine humanity of our Saviour. Can it be admitted that the God-man suffered his designs to depend upon external circumstances, and that his ultimate plan was imposed upon him by a repulse? Such a servile dependence upon actual events could not be reconciled with his character as Son of the Most High God. The reality of his sacrifice would be no less impaired than his divinity. What is a compulsory sacrifice, if not the mockery of a sacrifice? The sacrifice of Jesus Christ could not be real, except as it was voluntary. It must have been a matter of free consent; and, in order to be an object of free consent, it must have been foreseen, and, as it were, offered in advance. Everything in the work of Jesus Christ breathes a sovereign and absolute freedom; and for that reason it is the work of love. "I have power," said our Lord, "to lay down my life, and power to take it again." If he laid it down, it was not because it was impossible for him to act otherwise; it was of his free good pleasure, for the salvation of man. The plan of salvation was then plainly formed by him, and it is precisely the deep consciousness which he ever had of this fact which stamps his entire work with the seal of divinity.

Let us now, my brethren, endeavor to learn what was in all its grandeur this sublime plan of the Son of God. I find it admirably defined in the words of my text: "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." The plan of Jesus Christ is to fulfill the preparatory period. To fulfill does not signify to continue, but to bring to perfection, to realize fully. Jesus Christ,

when he promises to fulfill the period of preparation, is not to be understood as saying that he renders it ultimate, and that after giving it a new consecration he bequeathes to us the old law. On the contrary, by these words he declares that he brings that law to a close, and that he is the end of it. For him to fulfill the ancient covenant, is to develop it, to complete it. But he can not develop it except by rendering it spiritual; and the ancient covenant, when made spiritual, becomes the new covenant. We ought to expect that many institutions inherent in the former economy should disappear, that many ordinances should be abrogated. This is a necessary part of the fulfillment. That economy will not be truly fulfilled, that is to say, brought to its perfection, until the envelope, more or less gross and material, which contained the truth shall be broken. There is, then, of necessity something to be abolished in the old covenant in order to its fulfillment. When Jesus Christ said, "I came not to destroy," these words can not be taken in an absolute sense, for it is a fact that the new covenant has seriously modified the old. Our Lord wished to indicate the close bond of connection subsisting between his work and former revelations. Very far from doing away with these, he rested his work upon them because ultimately they came from him. Like all that is essentially fruitful and great, his mission was positive; he destroyed only that which impeded the complete realization of God's will.

And in this is found, my brethren, the secret of Christ's reformative power. If he had been satisfied with destruction, with denial, his work would have

possessed no originality, no vast and profound influence. The human soul abhors a vacuum in belief, and it prefers a false belief to a cold unbelief. Before Jesus Christ, all the religious past of humanity had been denied. But a negation which is merely a negation, has no power even to destroy. Men deny with their lips, but the superstition is cherished at the bottom of their hearts, and they resort to it in hours of suffering or of dread. The ancient philosophers denied heathenism during their lives, but paid homage to it when they came to die, by observing the rites which were commonly employed. If Jesus Christ had only said, I come to destroy, it would have been with him as with his predecessors. But he adds, I come to fulfill; I bring with me an absolute certainty; I bring a positive truth, and I connect it with all that is true and divine which has existed before me. We perceive by these words that we are in the presence not of a disputer, but of a revealer; and we do not fear to give up an imperfect truth for a truth more elevated.

It was, therefore, the plan of Jesus Christ to fulfill completely the preparatory period. It is necessary for us to ascertain in what sense he understood this fufillment, and what modification it brought to ancient institutions. This subject is of capital importance, for the confounding of the two dispensations has proved one of the most effectual causes of error in the church. Her history is signalized by constant returns towards the past, which was done away at the same time that it was fulfilled. St. Augustine has an admirable remark that the New Testament is hidden in the Old,

and the Old shines out in the New. Instead of entering into the spirit of this great saying, and leading the Old Testament by the light of the New, the reverse has been done. Men have taken again the vail that darkened the face of Moses, to throw it over the gospel, and they have deprived God's Book of a part of its power. This is that which the Galatians and other churches were already doing in the first ages; in our days, also, too often has the same deplorable confusion re-appeared. We are obliged to compare all erroneous views regarding Christianity with the plan of the Master, in order to apprehend his thoughts and to realize it in its results.

The preparatory period, as you know, my brethren, is not confined, in our view of it, within the limits of Judaism. It also comprehends that less direct work, the traces of which we discern in the bosom of paganism. Among pagan nations, as among the Jews, we have perceived the progressive steps of the desire for salvation. This desire Jesus Christ sought to fulfill; but since a perfect, a divine expression was given to this sentiment in the institutions of the chosen people, we will not go beyond the bounds of Judaism. In exhibiting the manner in which the desire for salvation was satisfied as regards the descendants of Abraham, we shall be taking the very method to show you how it was satisfied as regards all men, since the holy nation was the representative of humanity before God.

If we examine the form which the desire for salvation had taken among the Jews, we shall perceive that it became confounded in their minds with the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Their institutions were prophetic. But the holy nation constituted a theocracy, a visible government of the Lord. Consequently their hopes were directed to a restoration of the divine kingdom. They aspired not merely after individual salvation; they aspired, also, after a great development of the theocracy. Thus the prophet who immediately preceded Jesus Christ summed up all the hopes of his people in these words: "The kingdom of God is at hand." And this because in truth God does not desire merely to save individuals, but, furthermore, to found a kingdom upon the earth; man is not thrown, an isolated being, upon its surface; he belongs to a vast body. The restoration will not be complete till a humanity conformed to God shall be constituted anew, and the rebellious world shall again become part of the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ, on coming to fulfill the ancient dispensation, connected his work with this idea of the kingdom of God. He wished to separate it from all imperfection, and to realize it in an absolute manner; his plan was to establish upon the earth the true kingdom of God, which implied the abolition of institutions which, while useful with regard to the gradual education of the race, were hindrances, in consequence of their external character, to the definitive fulfillment of his great design. To fulfill the kingdom of God by destroying its first and transitory form, — in this thought is comprehended the entire plan of Jesus. We shall have need to mark clearly this destruction and this fulfillment.

The kingdom of God under the old covenant presents itself to us at the very first as one great prophecy of salvation. It is the "shadow of good things to

come." Heb. x. 1. Everything in the institutions of God's people announced the Saviour; everything assisted the desires of fallen man, who was calling for a Saviour, to mount up to God; and everything brought back to man the promise of the Father, who desires to give him a Saviour. Nothing more truly characterized the old covenant than the expectation of the Redeemer. It is in this vein especially that Christ has said, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Prophets and saints, faithful servants of God, who during so many ages have sighed for the deliverance of Israel, I have not come to disappoint that desire, to belie that faith. It is I for whom you wait. Here am I. I have no other mission. I come to accomplish all that for which you longed, all that which you have asked. You asked for a Saviour; I am the perfect Saviour, and could you all re-appear for a day you would recognize in me the end and the fulfillment of your aspirations. Abraham would see in me the true child of the promise; Moses, the great Prophet that was to come; David, the glorious Son to whom an everlasting dominion was promised; Isaiah, the mighty Deliverer, and the man of sorrows: all would adore me, and would say, Wait no longer for the Messiah; we possess him. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

Thus the essential plan of Jesus Christ is to fulfill the desire for salvation, to reconcile man with God, to offer the sacrifice of redemption, and to accomplish the promises. All his other designs are connected closely with this first design. Whoever assigns him another object has not understood our text. If Jesus

Christ came for anything else but to save men, he did not come to fulfill the old covenant; there is no relation between the new and the old economy; the harmony of divine revelations is broken. But it is not thus at all; the old economy stands in the same relation to the new as a prayer to the hearing of that same prayer, or rather as the shadow projected by a body to that body. Jesus Christ, in speaking of the sacrifice which summed up and finished his redemptive work, exclaimed, "For this cause came I unto this hour." We have here the most beautiful commentary on our text. To come for the hour of the cross was to come to fulfill the law and the prophets, for the law and the prophets had put the desire for redemption in the heart of man. To establish positively and completely the kingdom of God by reconciling man with him, — such was then the essential plan of Jesus Christ.

This fulfillment of the old covenant implied with respect to it very important modifications which entered into the Saviour's purpose. The principal institutions of Judaism, as we have already shown, were in the closest connection with its fundamental thought. Being sensible manifestations of the desire for salvation, they could not survive that desire. The desire once satisfied, their prolongation would have been absurd. To wish to transfer the shadows of the old covenant into the new is to deny that the Sun of righteousness and truth has risen. To perpetuate Judaism is to deny its fulfillment; it is saying to Jesus Christ, "Thou didst indeed form the plan of fulfilling the law and the prophets, but thou wast mistaken therein."

Every Jewish institution preserved in Christianity is a contradiction given to the Saviour. It is a never-ceasing protestation against his redemptive work, and, to use the energetic language of St. Paul, it frustrates the gospel of grace. We can not be Jews and Christians at the same time; we can not thank God that we have a Saviour, and act, at the same time, as if he had not yet come.

Recall to mind, my brethren, the principal institutions of Judaism, and you will understand perfectly the necessity which existed of transforming them. The first characteristic, the most prominent in the old dispensation, was its comparative want of spirituality. In that system, religion is more or less external to man. And so there is a multiplication of forms and ceremonies. A religion which easily penetrates our hearts, which is admitted there and dwells there, has no need to be rendered visible to the eye by means of so many symbols. It is so much the less outward as it is the more inward. But the religion of the Old Testament was essentially a religion of an outward kind. You know the endless multiplicity of its rites and requirements, and the pomps of its worship. By its numberless ceremonies it assumed a sensible character. It inclosed itself within the limits of a single country; it had its visible center within the walls of a sanctuary; it became incarnate in the priest; it was concentrated in the sabbath day. I need not longer insist upon the external nature of Judaism. It flowed naturally from the condition of men under the old dispensation. How could religion have been otherwise than external to man as long as a barrier existed

between him and God? He could not freely commune with God; the sentence of condemnation was between heaven and man. He was still afraid of God, for until the day of redemption he felt that he was lying under the stroke of God's judgments. Necessarily, man remained at a distance from a God who was not appeased. Hence the external character of that imperfect religion, which continued promising salvation, but did not actually give it.

This character of externality must disappear from the religion of Jesus Christ if he is truly a perfect Saviour. The first result of his work is to restore God to us; reconciliation is a re-union, a drawing nigh. Henceforth communion is possible between us and him. He is no longer a God afar off, but a God who is near. He desires even to dwell in us; and, instead of being external, religion becomes inward, that is to say, spiritual. If God is in us, we shall not be obliged to seek him in consecrated places and on holy days. He is everywhere with us, and we are in him. Thus Jesus Christ, in bringing pardon to the world, has brought to it spirituality at the same time. Spirituality everywhere takes the place of the external character of the old dispensation. It is fulfilled only by being spiritualized. Spirituality is inseparable from forgiveness. But the word spirituality is too vague, too general, to express the most glorious result of redemption. Let us speak more correctly, let us say that the first fruit of Christ's sacrifice was the gift of the Holy Spirit. You remember how often he renewed the promise of the Spirit in his last discourses, when, looking over his entire work at a single glance,

he indicates its most glorious results as a reaper counts up the sheaves of his field. This precious gift occupies the first place in his plan, because nothing could better persuade us that the sacrifice of redemption had been accepted by God. Christianity is the religion of the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as it is the religion of forgiveness. Before forgiveness was obtained, the Holy Spirit wrought upon the heart of man, but not in a continuous manner, on account of the separation then existing between humanity and God. Since redemption, that separation no longer exists; God can henceforth dwell in us. The Holy Spirit imparts to us in a profound manner all the gifts of heaven; it makes of religion a life, an inward and real life; it renders us partakers of the divine nature. Christian spirituality, then, has nothing in it that is inapprehensible or cloudy; it is exactly defined by saying that it is the presence of God in our souls through his Spirit. It is to our eyes the divine pledge of pardon, and the strongest proof that there is no longer a separation between us and our heavenly Father. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the very fulfillment of the old covenant, and it draws after it the abolition of its inherent imperfections. Where spirituality is wanting, consider that men have fallen back from the New Testament upon the Old, from the period of fulfillment to the period of preparation; consider that faith in forgiveness is impaired, that the Saviour's work is belittled, and that his plan is marred. Let us pass in review some of these perversions of the gospel. Judaism was a religion of purely external authority, a "ministry of the letter," according to the expression of

the apostle Paul. The revelation was rather graven upon stone than upon the heart of man. It bound itself upon him from without. It was a sacred yoke, beneath which he must stoop. No deviation was tolerated from the most inflexible unity, because there was no progressive assimilation of revelation, and no free investigation. It was the same with truth as with God; it also was external to man. Such is the meaning of these words, "ministry of the letter." The new dispensation, on the contrary, is, according to the same apostle (2 Cor. iii. 7), a "ministration of the Spirit." Not that there is any opposition between the letter of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. Nothing of the kind is here contemplated. Jesus Christ has said, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill." He did not abolish authority in religion; his mission was not negative in this respect more than in any other. Far from abolishing authority, he fulfilled it; that is to say, he brought it to perfection by rendering it more spiritual, by throwing open to it, in the exercise of gentle persuasion, the entire domain of the soul. Thus, in the new dispensation as in the old, the Holy Scriptures alone impart to us the truth; they possess in this respect a sovereign authority. But this truth, like God of whom it is the expression, is to pass over into us. It must be written in our soul in living letters, and these letters are traced by the finger of the Holy Ghost. It is he who leads "into the truth," according to the words of our Lord, by which we understand Scriptural truth. His anointing, let us say with St. John, "teacheth us all things." We no longer need that any one should instruct us, except God. Free access is granted

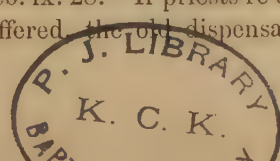
us unto him. Away with those who would place themselves between us and him! We have the privilege of freely communicating with him. This is our right: it is the right conquered for us by the blood of Jesus Christ, it is the result of pardon, it is the fulfillment of the old dispensation. What shall we say, then, of those who dispute this right, who put a tradition between us and God, and wish to bind it upon us as sovereign? What shall we say, if not that they overthrow the plan of Jesus Christ, that they deny the efficacy of his death, and bring us back to the very condition of mankind before he appeared? Ministers of the dead letter, ministers of tyrannical authority in religion, whoever you are, and whatever your disguises, whether Catholic or Protestant, all you who make of religion a lifeless tradition, an iron chain handed down from one generation to another, you deny both redemption and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and by your claims you say to Jesus Christ, "Thou hast not fulfilled the old dispensation, for we continue it as if thou hadst not come."

The external character of Judaism is discoverable, moreover, in the law given by Moses to God's people. The apostle Paul describes it as the "law of commandments contained in ordinances;" in fact, it entered into the greatest details in the rules of life which it prescribed, it directed man by its minute regulations as by leading-strings, and gave far more attention to the outside than to the inside of the cup. A severe and terrible law, its sanctions were multiplied punishments. For that very reason it is a powerless law, for terror by itself alone has never changed one soul. It entered

into the plan of Jesus Christ to give us a greatly superior law. In this sense, also, he could say, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Let us take heed not to believe that grace has abrogated the law as law, and that it has set us free from the rule of holiness. That would be saying, "Let us sin, that grace may abound;" that would be turning Christianity into a revolt against conscience. No, Jesus Christ, with all his compassion, did not come to destroy the law. On the contrary, he came to fulfill it, to complete it, to bring it to perfection. Woe to the pretended Christian who fancies himself to be set free in this particular. In fulfilling the law, Jesus Christ has magnified it; in spiritualizing the law, he has glorified it. No longer is it the law of ordinances. There is but one commandment: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." But forth from this commandment the Holy Spirit makes the entire Christian life to flow. In profound harmony with Scripture, the Scripture itself becomes a living rule, which operates rather by inspiration than by precepts. "Being led by the Spirit, we are not under the law." Gal. v. 18. The new law is connected more especially with the heart, whence issue the springs of life, than with outward acts. Being a law of love, it acts upon the affections to renew them, and the Christian can say, "The love of Christ constraineth me." According to the expression of St. James, it is a perfect law and a law of liberty, perfect in its very liberty; for, since it has no special requirements, it has no limits. The Christian is led onward to perfection, and Jesus aimed at no less in his plan than the holiness of his disciples.

What, then, shall we think of those who carefully gather up the fragments of the old yoke which man was not able to bear, in order to bind it upon him anew? What shall we think of those who build again a Mosaic code, who multiply cases of conscience, and enslave souls by their minute requirements? What shall we think of those especially, who, denying the gratuitous nature of salvation, would bring us back to the slavish and sterile fear, to the proud content and the inward agony of self-righteousness? What can we think of them, except that from grace they take us back to the law, and from Christ to Moses? What can we think of them, if it be not that they deny the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit? Do not they, too, say to the Saviour, "Thou sayest that thou hast fulfilled the old dispensation, but we continue it as if thou hadst not come."

Jewish worship more plainly than the other institutions of Judaism bears the stamp of the old economy. Its most striking features are sacrifice and the priesthood, and it is eminently in these two particulars that it was at once abolished and fulfilled. The priesthood announced the perfect Mediator, and sacrifice was a prophetic type of redemption. The Saviour is the sole priest of the new covenant, another priest made "after the power of an endless life." "Because he continueth for ever, he hath an unchangeable priesthood." Heb. vii. 16, 24. His sacrifice, as a sacrifice perfect and accepted of God, is substituted for all others. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Heb. ix. 28. If priests re-appear, if sacrifices are again offered, the old dispensation still subsists.



All those who to-day allege the permanence of the priesthood, and who can conceive of no worship without sacrifice, deny in toto the work of redemption. They withhold from Christ the price of his sufferings, which is the salvation of souls. Without knowing it, they charge him with error or falsehood. Yes, wherever a priest officiates, wherever an altar is raised, there is a positive denial of salvation, and a testimony borne against the work of the Saviour. If we are told that such priests and altars are found in temples erected to his glory, we reply that the priesthood and the sacrifice are in fact against his glory, since they deny the efficacy of his immolation. In vain show us the cross upon those churches. The cross becomes a piece of dead wood when the redemptive sacrifice is not acknowledged to be sufficient. The most beautiful anthems mingling with the clouds of incense do not prevent Jesus Christ from hearing the denial given him by every priest before every altar. "Thou hast not fulfilled the old dispensation," they tell him by these vain ceremonies; "for we continue it as if thou hadst not come, in institutions which most plainly declare the absence of a perfect Saviour."

We need not insist upon the external character of the Jewish worship, or its ceremonial pomp. It could only be celebrated in a sanctuary and upon certain days. The Sabbath and the temple were closely connected with the Mosaic system. Jesus Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfill; he therefore abolished neither religious festivals nor solemn worship. Only the whole life became one Christian festival. "Do everything in the name of the Lord, singing hymns

and spiritual songs." The Christian became himself a sanctuary consecrated to God. "Ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost." I will go even farther, and say that religious festivals and the temple, properly so called, are not rejected by Christianity, but they no longer possess that exclusive consecration which distinguished the Sabbath and the sanctuary at Jerusalem. Sunday is not a continuation of the Sabbath; it has been put in its place by the necessities of Christian worship, although no holier in itself than any other day of the week.* In Judaism, one day of the week is sanctified; in Christianity, the entire week pertains to God. In like manner, our temples are not holier than our dwellings. The Spirit is not imprisoned within walls. "The hour cometh," said Jesus to the Samaritan woman, "when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 21, 24. Consequently the fullness of the redemption is denied whenever consecrated days and places are adopted in an exclusive manner; and we have a right to say with St. Paul, "Ye observe days and months and times and years." "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?" Gal. iv. 9, 10. What opinion, then, must we form of those who rest almost the entire work of sanctification upon these "beggarly elements;"

* The serious error maintained by the author on this subject is nowhere more conclusively refuted in brief space (but with ample learning and logic) than by Prof. Schaff in his admirable little treatise, *The Anglo-American View of the Sabbath.* It is a manly and masterly vindication of the Christian Sabbath, and in part against just such errors as these, so generally entertained by Continental Christians. — Tr.

who multiply distinctions between days and between kinds of food; who admit into the year a season of Christianity after a season of worldliness, and who regard their churches as sanctuaries like that at Jerusalem? What can we think of them, except that they will not admit, notwithstanding the Master's declarations, that the ancient dispensation is done away?*

There are two distinctive peculiarities of Judaism, which, although seemingly opposed, are yet very closely connected together; I refer to its national exclusiveness, and to its religious nationalism. On the one hand, the chosen people form a nation apart, distinct from the other nations; the kingdom of God is comprehended within the boundaries of Judæa. On the other hand, whoever is born of a Jewish father belongs to the chosen people, and its privileges are transmitted with the blood. Every circumcised child becomes a child of Abraham. Doubtless the prophets insisted on many occasions upon the circumcision of the heart; but prophecy was anticipative of the new dispensation. This spiritual and prophetic aspect of the Old Testament did not prevent Judaism from forming a compact national body, distinct from the rest of mankind.

There exists, my brethren, an intimate connection between exclusiveness and religious nationalism. When a religion has become identified with a particular nation, it exists only among the people of that nation. Like the nation, it has a special native land; it is bound to a particular soil; it is inclosed within the

* These considerations apply, also, to that which is styled, by common consent, Sabbatism, which is something wholly foreign to Christian antiquity and to the Reformation; it Judaizes and perverts the beautiful and holy festival of Sunday.

bounds of the people to which it is enfeoffed. It participates in the nation's isolation, and is tied to time and space like the nation itself. One can say in what degree of latitude and longitude this religion is to be found, and repeat the famous saying of Pascal: "On this side of that mountain, truth; on that side, error." Religious nationalism has the effect, therefore, of narrowing the scope of religion. At first view, it seems to secure for itself an entire nation. A mistake. This religion will not possess the nation except in an external and superficial manner. It has the same bounds with the territory of the people that have received it *en masse*, and it is unable to cross those bounds.

The plan of God under the old dispensation, as we have already shown, embraced religious nationalism to the extent of entire exclusiveness. The plan of Jesus Christ was to remove from religion this very character of exclusiveness and nationality, and to render it at once human and individual. Jesus Christ was not satisfied with being a Jew only; he called himself preferably the Son of man. He was sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but he declared that he had other sheep, also, and that they all should form but one fold. The apostle Paul commented upon this promise in the sublime declaration: "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." In other words, it entered into the plan of Jesus to found a Christian humanity, transcending all barriers and limits of nationality. Wonderful thing! He made known to us not only Divinity, but also human-

ity. Humanity felt its unity first in him. Till this day it had been everywhere divided and rent into fragments. There were Greeks and Barbarians, the circumcised and the uncircumcised, free men and slaves. Humanity as one did not exist until after his coming. To him, and to him alone, do we owe those great ideas of unity and fraternity, the abuse of which should not lead us to lose sight of their greatness.

But Jesus Christ did not bring with him into the world a vague idea of humanity. His plan went infinitely farther than this. He desired to establish a great human society. And this great human society is the church,—the members of which are united to him as the branches are to the vine, and which forms a living unity; the church, which is his body, nourished and invigorated by his strength and his life. The church is simply the true humanity, humanity after the image of God, for it gathers its recruits among all tribes and nations, and our Saviour God is adored in all the languages of the earth. No more of her than of him can it be said, She is here, or is there. The church is in every place where Christ is loved. Where Christ is, there is the church, there is the Christian manhood, one in God through him. He alone was able to throw down the separating wall, and of two peoples to make but one, because he alone reconciled man with God, and because the fullness of his redemption, like a mighty river, spreads itself over the whole earth.

Thus in his plan all religious exclusiveness disappears. Religious nationalism is equally annulled, for exclusiveness follows this, as effect follows cause. The church is universal because it is tied to no nationality;

it rests upon individual profession of faith, and not upon a vague and collective profession, which binds no one in particular; it reposes upon living stones, and not upon the mingled dust of unconverted multitudes. Men are not members of the Christian church as men were Jews, by birth and circumcision, by virtue of an accidental fact and a form. In order to be of the church a man must be born anew. "Unless a man be born again he can not see the kingdom of God;" language of the Master, admirably interpreted in the famous saying of Tertullian, "Men are not born Christians, they are made such." Birth admitted into Judaism; only the new birth admits into the church. Between these methods of admission there exists all the difference between an involuntary fact and a moral fact, between flesh and blood and the glorious renewal by the Spirit of the Lord. The church, according to the plan of Jesus Christ, is not a people like any other, but a willing people, gathered in, man by man, through a personal and living faith. And as good-will is neither of Judæa, nor of Greece, nor of any particular country whatever; as it descends from him from whom all grace proceeds, and who is near every one of us; as the Spirit bloweth where he listeth, and men have never succeeded in confining him within any form whatsoever, — this willing people is the largest, the most human, association of which it is possible to conceive. So that those who everywhere appeal to individual faith in order to realize the Master's plan, far from giving us a narrow Christianity, give us primitive Christianity in all its extent, the Christianity of Jesus Christ, which fulfilled the old dispensation by destroying its exclusive and

national character. All you who bring back that exclusiveness and that nationalism are restoring an economy that has been done away; you who discover a selfish pleasure that is almost incomprehensible in confining the affections of God, and who regard the people of the new covenant as isolated and morose, well-nigh deserving the calumnious charge hurled at primitive Christians of being haters of the human race, be ye not deceived; you do not belong among Christians; you are eighteen centuries behind, with your miserable narrowness. You are Pharisees of Jerusalem. You who conceive of the church as a vast framework, open on all sides, in which the world has its place and its rights; you who wish to connect the church with different nationalities, and imagine that there is an English church, a German church, and a French church,—do not speak to us of your liberality. You restore abolished distinction; you efface the character of the church as universal, by a character which is particular, local, and accidental; and, above all, you weaken it by a deplorable confusion! And you, finally, who adopt both the exclusiveness and nationalism of the church, receiving into its bosom entire nations and their successive generations by an outward ceremony, and believing that by applying water to the forehead of your neophytes you have imparted to them the grace of God; you who to this frightful *multitudinism*, to employ a modern word, add the proscription for time and for eternity of all who are not of your church,—in vain do you parade the word universality on the forefront of your temples. True catholicity is neither exclusive nor external. If the faith of our fathers has been styled the pretended re-

formed religion, we shall be allowed to style the opposing faith the pretended universal religion. You who profess it, you also are eighteen centuries behind, and you are unanimous only in saying to Christ, "Thou hast not fulfilled the old dispensation." For all your efforts aim at its continuation!

Finally, my brethren, the kingdom of God under the first economy was a theocracy; that is to say, a divine government of an external and material kind. There were not two societies, one temporal and the other spiritual. There was but one society, which was both temporal and spiritual. Jerusalem was at the same time the Jewish city and the holy city. Religion and patriotism were blended together. Every offense against the law of the state was a religious offense, every religious transgression was a crime punishable by the magistrates. The Mosaic code regulated and controlled civil life, as well as worship and doctrine. This absolute confounding of temporal and spiritual society shows us that the Jewish theocracy was established and sustained by material force. To it were devoted the sword of the warrior and the ax of the executioner. It is this state of things which Jesus Christ came to destroy by fulfilling the old dispensation. Man in his infancy had need of this immediate tutelage of heaven. Moreover, the dispensation of the law was the dispensation of constraint; the glorious liberty of the children of God was not yet established. Redemption has changed everything in this respect, as in others. The reign of the Spirit can not be assimilated to this material government of God. This gross type of a

terrestrial monarchy became useless when God was brought nigh to man in the incarnation, and the divine Spirit was freely breathed forth from on high. Since redemption came, constraint disappeared before love and its free persuasion. The theocratic form was destined to fall to the earth, as falls the envelope which hides the winged insect. The old dispensation could not be fulfilled except by the abolition of the theocracy, properly so called. And this was most especially acknowledged by Jesus Christ when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world:" a great saying, the meaning of which is as plain as the light of day. "My kingdom is not of this world." What can this import, if it be not that the spiritual society is never to be confounded with the temporal; that in place of the confounding and intermingling of the two in Judaism, the former and the latter are to remain entirely distinct and separate?

The temporal society has its alternations, its revolutions, its triumphs. It falls, it rises again, and again it falls. The spiritual society, or the church, is to remain built upon the Rock of ages, which is no creature of a day, were it even an apostle, but that God who made the ages. Doubtless the Christian belongs to the two societies: he has to fulfill duties toward both. "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's;" such is the commandment of his Master. Only let it be well understood that if a conflict ever arises between Cæsar and God, the Christian will not need to deliberate; his choice is already made. He will regard man as man, and God as God.

That which more than all else, my brethren, has been done away, is the employment of external, material means in order to bring on the kingdom of God. However much they had a place in Judaism, to an equal extent are they criminal in Christianity. The religion of the Spirit is to be established by the Spirit. It must continually triumph over matter. It must not be possible for any one to say on the day of its triumph, It is not truth that has conquered, but material force. The plan of Jesus Christ was to overcome through the Spirit. For this reason not only has he proscribed the use of force in religion, by declaring that he who takes the sword shall perish by the sword, and that consequently a religion upheld by the sword may also perish by it, because it is thus degraded to the rank of earthly things; not only did he in advance denounce all outward constraint, all vengeful feeling, in saying to his disciples, who asked for fire from heaven to consume Samaria, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;" but he has also rejected human splendor and greatness, whatever form they may assume. He was born in poverty, he lived in ignominy, there was no form or comeliness in him; he was like "the things which are not;" and in all ages he has chosen the things which are not to confound the things which are. Far from clothing his disciples with external power and splendor, he has despoiled them in sending them forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. "Provide neither gold nor silver," "neither two coats;" be poor among the poor, weak among the weak, and nevertheless baptize all nations in the name of the Father, of the Son, and

of the Holy Ghost. Thus Jesus Christ sought the triumph of his cause, not by earthly power, but by weakness; not by riches, but by poverty; not by glory, but by disgrace. He styled himself a king on but one occasion, and that was before the tribunal of Pilate, when he had just been buffeted and evil-entreated, at the moment of his being delivered up to the soldiery of the Pretorium. O Christians, behold your King! He has thorns for a crown, and a cross for his scepter. Compare him with the king of Israel encompassed by his court and his armies, and thus learn that the old dispensation is for ever abolished. Perceive also that every attempt to make a theocracy out of the church is a shameful return to the past, and that the use of material force is equivalent to the renunciation of the new covenant. It is a cowardly desertion of the cause of Jesus Christ, and a rejection of his weakness and his poverty. Ah! let men spare him the wrong done him by a protection which he has not sought, and which dishonors his gospel! And especially let no one transform into a Jephtha, or a Gideon, him who fulfilled the old dispensation simply by doing away with all compulsion, and by bringing into the world a truth clothed with such beauty and consoling strength that it is able to gain all hearts by itself alone, without foreign aids, which would charge it with weakness. All persecution, whether little or great, is a base denial of the new covenant.

There is, however, one aspect of the theocracy which is spiritually fulfilled by our Saviour. The theocracy exhibits to us God's reign as embracing all the different spheres of individual and social life. It

embraced them by absorbing them all within itself. Henceforth there is to be a clear separation between the two societies; yet we are firmly persuaded that the purely religious society is called upon to penetrate the temporal society, to transform it, to model it in accordance with God's thoughts. We believe that the plan of Jesus Christ comprehended, secondarily, reforms in temporal society brought to pass by the agency of the gospel. Did he not himself compare his kingdom to leaven, which gradually penetrates the whole lump? This lump is unconverted humanity, society regarded as a whole. The gospel as active leaven operates powerfully upon this mass, which is so difficult to be transformed. It acts, first of all, upon individuals, but it acts also upon society. It is thus that Christianity changed the old pagan society, that it broke the fetters of the slave, emancipated woman, elevated poverty; it is thus that the Reformation consecrated the rights of conscience, so often misunderstood. Thus the church, while not of the world, acts profoundly upon the world; and the more she is separated from the world, the more insidious and powerful is the divine leaven, the more savor has the salt. It would be easy for us to show you that those countries in which the great principles of justice and freedom are best observed are also those in which the church has exerted its most benign and its most spiritual action. All the good which exists in modern society it owes to Christianity. All desirable reforms in the social order, which is still so imperfect and so mournful to contemplate, will proceed from Christianity, from true Christianity, individual and

spiritual, separated from the world in order more effectually to redeem it. I defy you to point out to me one idea of justice or of right which is not its creature. We put far from us those narrow doctrines that condemn the Christian to selfish isolation, and are not willing that he be occupied with the general interests of humanity, not even when it concerns the maintenance of the rights of conscience. Those doctrines are apart from Christ's plan; under pretense of spirituality, they belittle it. They deprive the gospel of its large and fruitful activity, and, if they triumphed, would convert the church into a narrow sect. The church! What have we said? We forget that this word is interdicted to us by these petty sects, and that there exist for them only scattered Christians, a few solitary men confined within a commodious Thebaïs whence heroic mortification has been carefully banished.

The plan of Jesus Christ is, moreover, connected with the theocratical idea in relation to the glorious future which it opens before our eyes. The kingdom of God must ultimately have its triumph in every domain. The resurrection, the new heavens and the new earth so plainly announced by our Lord, carry us to the happy day when harmony shall be re-established, and restoration from the Fall complete; a blessed state, which the Bible describes in these words: "That God may be all in all." The return of Jesus Christ to judge the living and the dead will bring on this consummation and this fulfillment of all dispensations. The prospect of this return should be at once a stimulus and a consolation for us. With

regard to all which afflicts and saddens our hearts, let us say one to another, He will return to set up his kingdom. With respect to all humiliations of the present, all manifestations of our weakness, let us say, He will come again with power. With regard to all the imperfections of our work, let us say, He will return to finish that which we have so feebly begun. We shall find in this thought a precious encouragement to redouble our activity. While freely admitting this prophetic aspect of the plan of our Lord, let us take heed not to materialize it as has been often done in the church, and let us not, through gross interpretation of prophetic language, go on to imagine a purely terrestrial felicity, a merely outward glory, by adding the hope of a resplendent vengeance upon the enemies of the church. That would be a final method of denying the fulfillment of the old dispensation; and against this we must very carefully guard in the study of prophecy.

"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." These words now convey to us all the riches of their meaning. The plan of Jesus Christ in its greatness is unfolded before our eyes. To establish the kingdom of God by restoring through redemption man to God and God to man; to establish in like manner the reign of the Holy Spirit by destroying all which pertains to the letter that killeth; to inaugurate the worship in spirit and in truth, the perfect law of liberty; to found upon the basis of personal faith and upon the remains of an exclusive religion, the church, the true Christian humanity; and, by means of the church, weak and powerless in the world's view, to penetrate and renew

society, until that day when the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell shall take the place of this earth, full of sin and of conflict; salvation, in one word, salvation, with all which is comprehended in that word: such is the plan of Jesus Christ. Perfect fulfillment of the preparatory period, it surpasses our desires. God has given more than we dared to hope for; and there is not one aspiration, one legitimate desire, which is not gloriously satisfied by this divine plan.

You will doubtless have remarked, my brethren, and perhaps regretted, the polemic tone of this discourse; but it was impossible for us, while considering the plan of Jesus Christ, not to be constantly comparing it with doctrines which pervert it. Is it our fault if there is a church which seems to have taken to heart the task of disfiguring his plan in every one of its parts? Is it our fault if, whilst Jesus Christ established the ministry of the Spirit and the law of liberty, that church by its traditions raises up again the ministry of the dead letter and the law of commandments? Are we to blame if, while Jesus Christ instituted the worship which is in spirit and in truth, that church erects temples as splendid as the ancient sanctuary, with images superadded; and if she speaks to the eye, and not to the conscience? Are we to blame if, while Jesus Christ has said, "I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by me," she gives him the lie, and says, It is I who am the way; pass by the way of my priests and my saints? Are we blamable if, whilst Jesus Christ has built a spiritual society upon his word, a society distinct from the world, but

open to every one who calls upon the name of the Redeemer, that church, on the one hand, summons the multitude to introduce them by an outward sign into its bosom, and on the other hand exclaims, Out of me no salvation; anathema to whomsoever does not receive all which our doctors have taught? Are we to blame if, while Jesus Christ has said, "My kingdom is not of this world," that church claims the right to reign upon the earth after the manner of kings and princes? Are we to blame if, while Jesus Christ was poor, she wishes to be rich; if, while he was not willing to shed any blood but his own, she approves of persecution, and imprisons and binds the servants of God, at this day, when, to her very great sorrow, she is no longer able to put them to death? Are we to blame if that church styles itself the Roman Catholic Church? Let us not be arraigned if we fight against it; let the plan of Jesus Christ be arraigned. Let the apostle Paul be blamed, and those letters in which still burns the fire of his indignation against those who desire to bring the church back from grace to the law. If it was allowable in a public discourse to place Protestantism side by side with Atheism,* it is allowable to reply by placing Catholicism side by side with Judaism. Moreover, there is in our heart nothing but love toward individuals. We know the force of prejudices. We very well know that there are Christians, brethren in Christ, who have gone astray in that great church, where, under the appearance of unity, so many tendencies find shelter. If we combat Romanism, it is because we can not bear to see so

* Discourse by Abbé Combalot.

many noble souls pining away in it, and so many others keep aloof from Christianity because they confound it with a doctrine which is so complete a transformation of it. Ardent friends of toleration, we are not friendly to a false peace, and to political management in religion; and so long as we shall be able to make ourselves heard we shall not cease to say that Romanism strives against the plan of Jesus Christ.

But it is not only in the bosom of that church, my brethren, that we meet with tendencies opposed to this divine plan. The cause of Christian spirituality is not yet won in the Reformed churches. We have seen even in some of them alarming returns toward Romanism. What can we say of those clerical opinions which have too often converted the evangelical ministry into a sort of priesthood? What can we say of those false doctrines concerning baptism, which, in the very midst of Protestantism, have sought to enthrone the Romish sacrament, the sacrament that saves by the outward act, regeneration flowing from the baptismal water? What can we say of the attempt to organize Christian states, true theocracies, exhibiting anew precisely the old dispensation, with the exception of miracles and a living prophetical order? What can we say of the union of different churches with governments? What of the denial of religious liberty in Protestant countries? What of a human tradition of orthodoxy, bound upon man without examination on their part? What of the admission into the spiritual society of nominal Christians in a mass? What can we say of a whole church that has not written over its door these words: "Men enter not here by birth,

but through conversion"? What can we say of all these deviations from the plan of Jesus Christ, if it be not, "Judaism, denial of the new covenant, return toward the old"? I express myself with the more freedom since we are now able to foresee that this noble cause of Christian spirituality, so often covered over with paltry names by its adversaries, is drawing near to its triumph.

Is not the breath of the Almighty felt moving upon these dry bones? Are not all faithful Christians drawing nigh to these great principles? Are they not beginning to understand that the matter in hand is not concerning little questions about the church, but concerning the church itself, the church which pertains only to her divine Spouse, the church which is alive only when separated from the world? Do they not discern that this generous desire of speaking to multitudes of men, which possesses so many hearts, will be the more fully realized in proportion as we shall more closely imitate the primitive church, victorious over a world of which, to use the apostle's language, it was the offscouring? Yes, a fruitful and glorious unity is forming, in order to labor, amid circumstances of peculiar difficulty, for the accomplishment of the Master's plan. Labor at this, my beloved brethren, in the path of true principles. The question is not with regard to particular ideas of the church; it relates to Christian spirituality, the reign of the Spirit, religious sincerity, personal faith, which is the only real, the only life-giving faith. It concerns the normal development of our glorious Reformation. It concerns a return to the noblest period in the history of the

church. Perhaps the time has come to suffer for these great principles; they also shall receive their baptism. Consider that they are worth suffering for, for it will be suffering for God. Consider that persecution has never impeded the plan of Jesus Christ, because it makes a part of it, and is as its crown.

May the consideration of this plan carry you away from the little thoughts and acts of your wonted lives. When, in order to realize it, you shall have given all your strength, all your time, all your prayers, you will still have given too little. Above all, never forget that it has for its only end the salvation of souls. Cleave to no truth, however beautiful it may be, without connecting it with this dominant aim. Let not meditation upon the purposes of God prevent you from immediately realizing those purposes according to the measure of your abilities. The plan of Jesus Christ asks for laborers rather than admirers. Realize it first for yourselves by your personal holiness, which is one of the great ends sought out by him. Realize it with regard to your brethren. Be not wearied with showing forth the Saviour as fulfilling not only the ancient written covenant, but also that unwritten covenant which God has made with every man in his heart and in his conscience. Entreat those who surround you to go to the Saviour. Tell them what he has borne for you. Tell them that he destroys only evil and sin; that is to say, that which perverts our true nature; and that this he perfectly fulfills. Appeal to their aspirations after the future life, to their inconsolable sorrows, and show them that only Jesus Christ answers

to their inward wants. Perhaps they will suffer themselves to be won; perhaps they will seek him. Be not disquieted. The Saviour is so well adapted to the repenting sinner that it is impossible they should not come together, and you will have the joy of having concurred in the fulfillment of his plan within the limits of your strength. You will have also to defend this plan against doctrines which pervert it. This, too, is one method of realizing his plan. Truth has indefeasible rights. We owe to it our testimony in season and out of season. But the polemical duty is one of delicacy, and the only means of well accomplishing it is to imitate Jesus Christ. Let your controversy, like that of Jesus Christ, be always positive. Destroy only whilst you build up. Destroy only whilst you fulfill. Never create a void in any heart by the destruction of a false belief without filling it at once by giving it a superior belief. Enable men ever to comprehend with increasing clearness that Christianity is essentially positive and affirmative. With that aim, seek their edification in everything, and press every doctrine, every truth, till the nourishing marrow is distilled from it. Never leave mere ruins behind you, but by means of those ruins establish in the mind of your brethren the foundations of a new edifice. The plan of Jesus Christ you are to defend in the same manner in which he laid it down himself when he confronted Judaism.

In my next discourse I will show you with what inward convictions we must labor upon this plan, by recalling to your minds the manner in which the Sav-

iour fulfilled it; that is to say, I shall speak to you of his holiness. May God grant us to be, in regard to this great work, co-workers with Jesus Christ in the spirit of Jesus Christ!

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOLINESS OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us."—1 John iii. 16.

AFTER having considered the plan of Jesus Christ, we propose now to inquire in what spirit he has accomplished it. It does not suffice to have formed a lofty purpose; if the manner in which that purpose is executed is not worthy of it, if little passions are subsidized to aid a great thought, the very beauty of the plan renders this moral disharmony more culpable and more painful. Do we not know by experience that it is possible to have the most generous and elevated conceptions, to set them forth with a degree of good faith, and yet, in defending and accomplishing them, to be swayed by inferior motives? On the other hand, we seldom see a man who avows a low and interested object; and should he carry his cynicism to that extent, it could be expressed only in the closest intimacy. Never in the presence of assembled men would he dare to manifest a shameful and vulgar selfishness. The human conscience would not brook such a want of respect, and it would take vengeance on the offender by vehement indignation. Nothing shows more clearly its power, notwithstanding the Fall, than the necessity imposed on the wicked man of coming to

terms with conscience. Before he is able to begin the dissemination of a bad doctrine, he is obliged to ask a kind of passport of his conscience, by assuming to himself a semblance of generosity and moral elevation. He hangs out his flag to hide deceitfully his detestable merchandise. It is thus that systems of sheer materialism are placed under cover of the great principles of justice and love to man. Often this is not hypocrisy, at least not willful hypocrisy. Man is self-deceived, self-deluded. The evident greatness of the object is not therefore a sufficient guaranty of the moral greatness of him who conceived that object. Perverseness may be hidden beneath beautiful and noble words. But without going so far, admitting the plan to be admirable, and the sincerity unquestionable, is there not a lamentable weakness inherent in human nature, which often reduces the most elevated views concerning our vocation to a hopeless ideal? Is not this distance between our ideal and our life one of our sufferings that are most inward and most constant? Is it not the seal of our imperfection?

We could not, then, content ourselves with acknowledging that the plan of Jesus Christ surpasses all that which man could ever foresee or anticipate, that it is truly a plan worthy of redeeming love. If this plan of love has not been realized by love; if the person of Christ does not attain to the hight of his purposes; if it is possible to find one shadow in the picture, one imperfection in his life, — this plan will have been the purest, divinest dream of humanity, but it is nothing more: we have no Saviour, salvation is not achieved. For it is not with this plan as with others. We may

admit that in a moment of inspiration a man of genius conceives a fruitful idea, that he casts it into the world, and that it there makes its way without him. It matters little really how he defends it. The idea is not incorporate with him. On the contrary, the plan of Jesus Christ can not be separated from his person, for its first condition is the Saviour's holiness. Thus, my brethren, the question about to occupy us is intimately connected with that which we examined in our last discourse. Was the Saviour perfectly holy? that is tantamount to asking, Was his plan fulfilled, or is it still one of those chimeras, one of those clouds of more or less of brilliancy which have only flitted across the horizon of humanity? Would that I might, my brethren, in place of all demonstration of my Saviour's holiness, lead you to his feet: were I permitted to bring you to behold him, as the inhabitants of Judæa saw him eighteen centuries since, I am persuaded that the conviction of his holiness would seize upon you with irresistible force. It would appear to you as clear as the sun, it would overflow you like the light of the day. The exceeding humility and gentleness of his aspect; the noble purity of that brow crowned with a pitying sadness before it was crowned with thorns; his expression, profound like the love of God, benevolent like the love of a brother; his simple and compassionate speech; that group of afflicted ones gathered around him as around their natural comforter; the traces of toil and suffering upon those features, which remind you that he has not where to lay his head; that whole character, both divine and human, which you would thus gaze upon, would tell you more than all which we could un-

fold. And truly, our remarks will be useless if you have not obtained in some degree that view of Jesus Christ. I rely upon this sudden, irresistible demonstration which takes possession of an upright mind on its first contact with our Lord. Where this should fail, no evidence would be convincing. To render it more present to your minds and your hearts; to develop that which is implicitly contained therein; to speak to you of the holiness of the Saviour with the only purpose of sending you to him with stronger desires to behold him; to leave you in the presence of his absolute perfection prostrate in the dust, and to bend my knee there with you to adore him, or rather to give scope to our common adoration, — such is the entire aim of this discourse, which I ask my God to bless to you and to me.

I shall not pause long to prove the holiness of Jesus Christ. I prefer rather to show it to you. And this not because we are not very strong in this lower ground. If it be true, as we have said, that there is often a want of harmony between a beautiful plan and the acts or sentiments of him who conceived it, we ought, nevertheless, to admit that a plan truly perfect implies moral perfection. At the highest elevation all lines come together; they separate and break only at a lower point. Perfection of understanding must correspond with perfection of moral life. It may be admitted that a thought half enlightened is compatible with a heart more or less defiled. But if the understanding is completely luminous, we must conclude that the soul is altogether pure. As long as there is one sin in the soul, a

shadow will spread itself over the understanding; if this is truly without shadow, it is because the being to whom it belongs is without sin. Perfect truth and perfect goodness blend together in one and the same ray, as luminous as it is pure. Thus from the perfection of Christ's plan we can already infer his holiness.

We have, moreover, his own testimony. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" he asked his enemies. "The prince of this world hath nothing in me," he said to his disciples at the end of his earthly career. He could invoke alike the testimony of his friends and his adversaries. Those who transmitted to us the narrative of his life were his immediate disciples. They lived in intimacy with him: they saw him not only on the public occasions when he taught the people; they followed him everywhere, even into the desert, whither he loved to withdraw; they never left him; and they would all, doubtless, have repeated those words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." What man is there, what hero, what saint, who could approve himself worthy of such a judgment under such unceasing observation? The testimony of the enemies of Jesus Christ is still more conclusive. Their fixed purpose was to ruin him; not only had they spies in watch for him, they also laid snares for him; and when the time arrived for gathering the fruit of these diabolic devices, when they brought him to trial, they found themselves obliged to suborn false witnesses, to pay them, and these false witnesses could allege nothing but a single word of the Master,

perfidiously interpreted by them. What more striking homage could be rendered to the holiness of the Saviour? The mere attempt to darken it required the purchasing of stupid falsehoods. But the hatred of the enemies of Jesus Christ is yet higher evidence in his favor. When we see not only great criminals, like Herod, but also honorable people in the estimation of the world, like the Pharisees, and wise skeptics, like the Sadducees, roaring with rage against our Lord; when we see the most considerable man in the nation, the high priest, so carried away at a solemn trial as to buffet the accused, we may be assured that it is no half-holiness that lighted up that hatred, but that, in order to bring the darkness to such a violent opposition against the truth, it needed nothing less than light in its utmost clearness.

We have also an impregnable argument of fact. The entire church rests upon the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ. Upon this faith she is built. Take this away from the church, and it falls to pieces. Are we not right in reasoning from the strength and majesty of the edifice to the strength of the foundation itself? What! this temple, or rather this citadel, constantly assailed, to which every age in its turn has laid siege, shall be regarded as resting upon a legend? Instead of the corner-stone which seemed to us as indestructible as the rock, we have but the shifting sand of a false tradition? What! is it thus, while reposing upon a lie, that the Christian faith has triumphed over so many storms and in so many combats? It might as well be said that one of those Roman edifices which are victorious over the ages

was built upon a crumbling base. Let us confess that the church is a permanent witness of the holiness of Jesus Christ.

Finally, my brethren, the very idea of the holiness of our Saviour, as presented in the gospel, guarantees its historic verity. Before Christianity no similar idea had existed. Moral perfection had been descried dimly, but how limited among the Jews, how defiled among pagans! The Christian ideal, by which I understand the perfection which the gospel makes known, — that ideal of humility and love could be known only in being realized. A history, a divine history, lies at the basis of this entirely new conception of holiness. Whence could men have derived the colors to paint the picture of a life like the life of Christ? Had they ever seen anything like it? Could Greece have furnished the humility? Was it possible for the stern Jewish theology to exhibit the charity? Add that it is at the epoch of the most frightful corruption that this type of perfect goodness is supposed to have been invented. If the gospel is an invention, we do not hesitate to say, with Rousseau, that the inventor is more wonderful than the hero! It is easier to believe in the holy life of Jesus Christ, than to believe that the evangelists imagined such holiness. One miracle compared with another, the former appears to us the more rational; and as this miracle is the great support of our faith, we adhere to it with the most entire certainty and the most joyous confidence.

The holiness of Jesus Christ, — we will now indicate its general characteristics. Before all else it is hu-

man; it does not lie beyond the conditions of our nature. The life of Jesus Christ is verily a man's life, or rather it is the life of God in human life. The more divine human life is, the more does it approach its ideal, that is to say, its true destination. Jesus Christ is with God, he lives in God, and by virtue of that very fact he is the perfect man, the typical man. He is also our model and our law; and the apostles were fully authorized to say to us, "Be ye followers of him; have the same mind which was also in him."

More than this: we dare affirm that Jesus Christ has himself known, he also, trial of his freedom. We believe with all our soul in his original purity, but we equally believe in the reality of his humiliation. He submitted himself to the moral condition of humanity. He passed through his conflict and his temptation, and that perfection which he possessed by nature, he acquired as it were anew by the determination of his will. In this there abides a great mystery. How conceive that the Son of God has been tempted? But how admit that the Son of man, the second Adam, could save the lost race without moral trial? That night in Gethsemane, those cries and tears, that agitation of the conflict, that triumph purchased at the price of so many sorrows, — would not all that touching scene related by the evangelists be but a vain illusion, a kind of theatrical representation? In that event let no one speak to us of Christ as a pattern. If his divinity placed him above trial and conflict, we have nothing in common with him. Doubtless his temptations differed from ours. The tempter had nothing in him, whilst in our natural incli-

nations he finds numerous points of contact. Never did he succeed in exciting a single wrong desire in the holy soul of the Redeemer. But it is none the less true that Jesus Christ performed an act of his will to preserve the holiness which he had brought from heaven. When Scripture tells us that he groaned and cried unto God, in these words we do not see a mere image, but a positive fact, a precious fact, which establishes a complete oneness between us and him. The greatness of the trials of Jesus Christ was the seal of his holiness. We know not what to think of a man who has not been tried. Secret forces of evil may be sleeping in him for lack of an opportunity to manifest themselves. There is no sure holiness except the holiness revealed in the midst of pain and peril. In this point of view what was wanting to Jesus Christ? What snares, what assaults, what sufferings had not befallen him? The people wished to make him a king, and they sacrificed him. He underwent the trial of extreme enthusiasm and that of extreme ignominy; and finally he suffered himself to be led forth to punishment. Does not holiness crucified become holiness perfected? Is it possible to go beyond that? Who does not perceive, then, that trial, earnest human trial, was necessary to the Redeemer's glory?

The holiness of Jesus Christ, while profoundly human, is distinguished by a characteristic which is exclusively its own; it is harmony in the qualities of the soul. You do not discover this harmony in any other man. Take the greatest, and you will see that this greatness results from the marvelous play of some

one of their faculties. That which strikes us in them is that which rises above the level of their souls. An isolated quality is the more remarked because it is specially detached from that which is fundamental in the moral life. And yet there is in this an imperfection. It is important that the entire moral life should be raised, and should be purified, and not that it should project itself particularly on one side. We are constantly suffering ourselves to be deluded in this respect. We experience a more lively and eager admiration on beholding the waves of the sea lifted up by the tempest than on seeing the same waves in smoothness and repose. Yet the heavens are better reflected in the quiet sea than in the sea when tempest-tossed. Human greatness, as it ordinarily exhibits itself to us, is an impetuous wave, rising above other waves in majesty and in thunderous sound. The holiness of Jesus Christ is like the limpid water which reflects the azure of the sky in its immense expanse and its peaceful luster. In his holiness there is nothing that shows, for the very reason that it is absolutely perfect; it gushes forth from the depths of his being, always alike, equal to itself; it is rather inward than outward; it sacrifices nothing to the glory that comes from man, and knows neither fluctuation nor decline. Moreover, all the great words by which exceptional qualities of mind or soul are designated have no application to Jesus Christ. It will not be said that he possessed wonderful genius; nor will it be said that he was a hero; one feels that a certain intellectual greatness, or a certain moral greatness, separately considered, would not be in agreement with his character. One word alone is

worthy of him; it is holiness, because he comprehends at once all perfections.

But, my brethren, it is not sufficient to contemplate in a general manner the characteristics of Christ's holiness. We must also learn the elements that composed it. Pagan antiquity has already anticipated the knowledge that holiness consists in imitating God. This fruitful truth has been admirably stated in the gospel. "Be ye therefore perfect," said Jesus Christ, "even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." What can be clearer and more conformed to the simplest suggestions of conscience? Where should the type of perfection be found, if not in God himself? Can a perfection be admitted which is without him? Is he not the supreme beauty, truth, and goodness? It is impossible to conceive of anything better than a life conformed to him, and reproducing the lineaments of the divine image. If we then wish to have a precise idea of holiness, we have only to ask ourselves what is the nature of God. It is unnecessary to enumerate all his glorious attributes. There is one which rises above and comprehends all the rest: it is love. "God is love," says St. John. Charity, love, that is the nature, the very being of God. The gospel reveals it to us, — I should rather say, reveals it to our minds; for, in listening to this revelation, conscience embraces it as a truth for which it was prepared, and which it had formerly known. There is not a human conscience that does not acknowledge that there is nothing morally so great or so beautiful as love. If, then, Jesus Christ was perfectly holy, he would have perfectly represented in himself the divine nature, and

his life would have been the perfect manifestation of charity, for charity and holiness are inseparable. In order to prove his holiness we need only show you his love, to which our text formally invites us: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." Love is manifested in the different relations of life. But we sustain relations with God first, and then with our brethren. The law of love is fulfilled in this twofold relationship. The great precept of the old law and of the new comprehends alike the love of God and the love of our brethren. We have, therefore, to set before you as well Christ's love to the Father as his love to men.

Love consists, according to the teaching of St. John, in laying down one's life for others; it is a gratuitous gift, perfectly disinterested. It is first revealed by the despoiling of itself, by inward renunciation; it is afterward realized by sacrifice or outward despoiling of itself; and it is finally consummated in the divine and immortal joy of love, for a sacrifice which does not bring happiness, which is offered reluctantly, is not a true sacrifice. In order, then, to depict to you the holiness of Jesus Christ, we shall have to depict, in so far as this is given to man, his inward renunciation, his sacrifice, or his constant self-immolation, and the holy and divine joy of his charity, whether God were its object, or whether it expanded over our poor humanity. If we succeed in thus engraving the thought of our text upon your hearts, we shall need to add nothing in order to establish our Saviour's holiness; for what is there more holy, more perfect, more divine, than love?

Humility is the first form of inward renunciation; without humility, it is vain, though we give up all our goods, though we should deliver our bodies to be burned; those sacrifices would not be sacrifices, or rather they would be offered to ourselves. Our tears and our blood would be poured out upon the altar of pride and selfishness. Without humility, sacrifice is hypocrisy, and devotement a falsehood. We must then speak, first of all, of the humility of Jesus Christ. Call to mind the picture of him given by St. Paul in a few words: "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." The incarnation, the voluntary poverty and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, are the great manifestations of his humility. We have already had occasion to insist upon this infinite self-abasement, this humiliation of the Son of God. It is evident that he who, being rich, rich in all divine glory, became poor, poor in regard to his being a man, and poor even among men, will never seek for earthly glory. After that which he had left in heaven, after having left the right hand of the Almighty and the throne of Omnipotence, what could our low world, our world of sin, offer him? And yet, when we remember the pitiable weaknesses of human nature, we are filled with wonder if we consider the constant humility of Christ in the different phases of his life! What humility toward his Father! We are touched by the self-denial of John the Baptist, who with a holy impatience refers all the homage and ad-

oration offered him to the person of the Saviour. How his humility pales beside that of Jesus Christ! The only Son of God, he utters not a word, he performs not a miracle, without rendering the glory to the Father. He is never wearied with repeating that he is doing his work, that he is his messenger. How many times does it not happen to us, frail messengers of God, miserable and unworthy embassadors of his grace, to pervert to our advantage the glory which pertains to him alone! The earthen vessel in which the heavenly treasure is deposited glories in possessing this treasure, as if it truly belonged to itself! And he in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, the Eternal Word incaranate, the Holy One and the Just One, ceased not during his entire earthly career to prostrate himself in spirit before the Father! He was the most humble of his Father's servants. He declares that the Father giveth him all power. He goes so far as to say, "I can of mine own self do nothing." "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." John v. 26. If he speaks, it is in his Father's name. "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." John vii. 16. If he performs a miracle, his eyes, lifted up to heaven in humble prayer, show whence he derives his strength. "The works which the Father hath given me to finish." John v. 36. If a few disciples gather around him, he does not attribute it to his word, so divine and so powerful, or to his shining works: "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Were a feeble witness of the truth, like him who speaks to you, your

companion in sin and in condemnation, to urge with such energy his absolute dependence upon God, his humility would be considered remarkable; it would justly be regarded as uncommon and exceptional. What shall we say then of our divine Saviour? As far elevated above us in holiness and power as the heavens are above the earth, he yet subjected himself to his Father as no one of us has ever done. Let us confess that there lies as great a distance between his humility and ours, as between his perfection and our unworthiness.

Let us contemplate this same humility as regards the relations of Jesus Christ with men. Who has ever in the kingdom of God been in such utter loneliness as he? Who has labored beneath the burden of such a shame? I do not refer to Christians of the present day. Some have endured outrages for Christ's sake. But the greater part know only from their recollections of history what St. Paul has called the reproach of Christ. They are well received even in the world; they have encountered there a certain degree of opposition, but the distance is very great from this opposition to shame and reproach. No, we do not know what it is to be treated like the dogs of men and the offscourings of the earth. We have not been covered with filth, we have not been scourged and spit upon. A polite and refined society endures us patiently, probably because we endure them too well ourselves. There are countries where piety is an occasion for public respect and consideration; there are countries — and we envy them not — where evangelical Christianity stands well at court, where it may

count upon the most exalted dignities and the most coveted positions. I know that it is not thus everywhere; reproach is still found in the bosom of the family, for that man who is a solitary believer among his kinsfolk, and who is faithful; and in the few countries, also, where persecutions yet exist. But what compensations there are! By the grace of God there is a great believing people on the earth, scattered abroad in every place. Christian sympathy is like an immense electrical chain which in the twinkling of an eye is shaken throughout its whole extent. If a Christian at this day is persecuted and trampled on somewhere, he excites the warmest interest, he becomes the object of thousands of prayers, his name flies from mouth to mouth. If he does not grow in humility in proportion as he rises in the esteem of his brethren, the unquenchable thirst for glory which is in our souls is revived in him, and he tastes treacherous praises, which come to him disguised as prayers. The natural heart is satisfied in that lust which is most difficult to be repressed. Something like this might have occurred at the very origin of the church, at the epoch when it could be justly said that men bore in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. When the apostle had been smitten with rods by the officers of the Sanhedrim, or treated like a fanatical fool, he could ascend to the upper chamber in Jerusalem; there he would be surrounded with brethren who covered him with their tears, and testified to him their affection and their admiration. In this narrow circle pride might still find its food. Among all the servants of God only one

labored at his work without any amends of this description. Those who awarded glory in his nation were his passionate enemies and calumniators. It would have been easy for him to gain them over by a flattering word. Instead of such a word, he smote their hypocrisy with an anathema that could never be forgotten. The people would willingly have made him their king, but not only did he regret their gross homage, he also trampled under his feet their most cherished prejudices. The solitude that invested him was enhanced. He labored without the support of the chiefs of the people, and without the sympathy of the people themselves. True, a few disciples surrounded him; but they were so poor, so wretched, so ignorant, that they added to his ignominy. Moreover, they understood him not; they had not as yet a just idea of his work. He accomplished it alone. And when the time of peculiar travail came, when he was about to dig the furrow in which should be deposited the seed of eternal life to be watered with his blood, he looked around him, and, behold! he stood alone; there was no one to uphold him. His friends had fled. In the vast universe there was not one soul truly in communion with his own. His reproach was complete, absolute. Oh, loneliness of my Saviour, unexampled ignominy, shame willingly endured! Unequaled humility!

Self-renunciation is first manifested by humility; but this does not exhaust it. To renounce glory is not all; we must also renounce self-will, our own interests, all that which we possess. To renounce one's interests, will, and self for God, is at once to obey God. Obedience is the realization of love. Glow of feelings,

ardent convictions, burning words of adoration, are not equal to the smallest act of submission. It is easy to be moved, and to break forth in praises. This may be a kind of fever, an excitement of the heart which subsides as rapidly as it rose. Love is neither an ecstasy nor a song: it is a gift; and there is no true gift except that which springs from the will. Obedience to God is therefore the most sincere manifestation of love toward him.

You know, my brethren, how far Christ's obedience to his Father extended. The entire work of redemption was an act of obedience; and we love to insist upon this view because it brings forward the profound harmony which exists between the Father and the Son. The salvation of men was a purpose of God's will; in accomplishing it Jesus Christ realized the designs of God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." From the beginning to the end of his career our Saviour had a deep consciousness of this plan of divine compassion. He executed it in all its parts with the most complete submission. Antecedently to his incarnation, the Son is shown to us as fulfilling the will of his Father. From all eternity he has said, "Here am I; I delight to do thy will;" and he offered himself as the pure victim of the pure sacrifice. During the course of his earthly life he has but one thought, and that is obedience. This is already expressed in the first word uttered by him which is given in the gospel: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" When in the full career of his ministry, he sums it up in these words: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." Step by step he follows

that holy will; he cared for it alone. If he betakes himself to some city or some village, it is by the prompting of the Spirit. When the Spirit drives him into the desert, he goes into the desert. When it takes him apart far from his enemies, he remains in the most lonely regions. When it leads him to Jerusalem, although it were at a time of the greatest danger, when the hatred of the Jews is bursting forth with savage violence, he does not hesitate. He who hid himself yesterday because his Father willed it, now presents himself with the greatest calmness in the midst of the astonished multitude, in the presence of his raging adversaries, in the temple or in the market-place, in obedience to that same will. He seeks not to hasten his hour; but as soon as that hour of sorrow and shame has come, "For this cause came I into the world," he cries. If you wish to know what perfect obedience is, go and learn it in the garden of Olivet, where, before drinking the cup of condemnation, he uttered those words beyond which nothing can be conceived of as the expression of a submissive heart, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt." "Father, thy will be done." Forget not that everything in these sufferings is voluntary; that he has but to make a sign in order to change that gloomy garden into an Eden of glory. And yet that sign he did not make; he remained in the dust, struggling and groaning, until the armed band, led by the traitor, seized upon him. He did not make it, because he had said, "Father, thy will be done," and the Father's will extended even to the sacrifice on Golgotha. He was

obedient even unto the cross! Can obedience possibly go farther?

If self-renunciation is expressed first by humility and obedience, it is manifested also, in a very touching manner, by compassion. Compassion is love of the unfortunate; of him from whom we can derive no advantage, who has nothing to give us in exchange for our affection. It is a love truly gratuitous and disinterested. Such was the love of Jesus Christ toward men. This compassion overflows from all the words and all the acts of our Saviour. There is a word in the evangelist Luke which has always deeply moved me, and which, in its simplicity, seems to me to say more with regard to the compassions of Jesus Christ than a multitude of explanations. "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." Luke xv. 1. What impelled them thus to approach Jesus Christ? Whence came the attraction? Surely it was not the hope of finding in him a convenient indulgence for their vices. Never had even a glimpse been caught of like purity and holiness. And yet publicans and sinners pressed about him to such an extent that he was accused of being one of them. Ah! it was up to that time they had felt themselves despised, repulsed, and harshly judged. Here is a being pure among the purest, a man perfectly holy, who, far from rejecting them, calls them near to him and speaks to them with love! For the first time they are loved, loved notwithstanding their misery, or rather on account of their misery. The looks of Jesus fall upon them with an inexpressible and tender pity. Never had they felt that which they now experienced on seeing themselves

welcomed and consoled, after being for so long a time the outcasts and the scorn of a nation which only trampled them under foot. They had not yet learned that those who are the last in the judgment of selfishness, which lives only by taking advantage of one's neighbor, are the first in the judgment of love, which lives only by freely yielding itself up for the sake of others. Those preferred by genuine love are unfortunate and miserable beings. The more feeble, forsaken, lost, a being is, the more happiness is felt by unselfish love in giving itself for him, the more occasions does it find for manifesting itself. Thus the Son of man, who was the incarnation of this love wholly free, likened himself most justly to the good shepherd who leaves the ninety and nine sheep in the fold, to seek the lost sheep in the wilderness. Poor sheep! he is not worth the trouble of a single effort to find him; he is worth so little compared with those remaining in the fold, he is so weak, he is so far away, he is going to die. Thus selfishness speaks. But that which repels it inflames compassionate love. He is miserable, he is weak, he is lost afar off; it is for that reason that I love him, and I shall go after him until I find him. The objections of selfishness are the arguments of charity. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

There is in Christ, as it were, a rendezvous for all kinds of weakness, misery, and perditions. You find there first the little child; his very weakness makes him dear and precious to the Redeemer. Man sought to put him away from Christ; but he took him in his arms. He covers with his love, and gives him that

blessing which rests upon the cradles of our new-born babes: "Suffer them to come unto me." At the child's side see the ignorant, the illiterate man, whom contemptuous teachers wished to lord it over. Eternal wisdom welcomed them in its tender pity, for it has milk to give those who can not endure strong meat. And near him is the poor man. Long enough has he remained upon the threshold of the wicked rich man, bearing contempt and disdain. At length he has met with his protector and his friend, and this friend is his God. The divine poor man who traversed Judæa without possessing anything desired to array himself in poverty in order to glorify it. He left upon it as it were a luminous ray from his transit. He identified himself with the poor man; in him he suffers till the end of the world. He hungers and thirsts with him. The sick, the palsied, the blind, alike surround the divine comforter. They are his constant attendants. All suffering runs to meet his footsteps. Poor widow, who hast lost thine only son; Martha and Mary, afflicted sisters, who buried your beloved brother three days ago, we find you also at his side. How is it that you should not be near him? Do we not read in the gospel twice, "Jesus wept"? He wept over your sorrow, he wept with you. He is just the comforter whom you need. But what! the rapacious publican dares to approach him! What! that lost woman, laden with vices, infamous among the most infamous, — she at his feet! Shall we not say with Simon, "Let her be driven out; she profanes the threshold which she has crossed"? No, no; let us leave her with the gentle Master! Where would she go, if you rejected her? Has she another

asylum? Who can say to her, "Daughter, go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee"? Fear nothing; if she has come, if she has confronted such a shame in such a house, it is because she has read the heart of Jesus; she has heard the summons of that compassionate love which is greater than every sin. She was made for Jesus Christ; I appeal to her perdition and her repentance. Jesus Christ was made for her; I appeal for proof to his compassion. And thus he goes forth, to employ the beautiful image of Scripture, like a king in the midst of the afflicted, like the peaceful King of everlasting consolations; and whenever he shall advance anew, whether it be in a church or in the person of a true Christian, that same attractive power of pitying love shall be exercised, and there will again be seen that concourse of unfortunates, of feeble folk, and of lost beings. Woe to the churches and to the Christians concerning whom it can not be said, "Publicans and sinners draw near to them." It is a proof that in their pitying bosoms love is about to become extinct.

We have merely touched upon the compassions of Jesus Christ; they are indeed infinite. If it be true that they were first directed toward the most miserable and the most degraded beings, not the less were they bestowed on the entire lost race of man. In like manner as all men are involved in the condemnation, so are they involved in the compassions of Jesus Christ. He took pity not only on publicans and sinners, but also on Pharisees. Did he not weep over Jerusalem, over all its inhabitants, in the chief rank among whom were found his enemies? Listen to the heart-rending lament of his unheeded compas-

sion: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Luke xiii. 34. It is not over friends that he is weeping, it is over enemies. He has nothing but death to expect from them; it matters not, he loves them in spite of themselves, because his love is not measured by that which he may receive; it is wholly unselfish. Upon the cross his compassion is again displayed; he dies pardoning his executioners. He bore in his heart the burden of all our sorrows; his compassion embraced the condemned of the whole world, his pity caused it to press upon him; and this is the fearful weight which crushed him in the dust of Gethsemane.

But, my brethren, compassion does not suffice; there must be consolation also. Pity is only complete when it is efficacious. The compassion of Jesus Christ always resulted in deliverance; and it is in this respect that we ought to admire his life of sacrifice and suffering, which manifested inward renunciation by a renunciation of an external kind. He went about, we are told, doing good. He knew neither fatigue nor danger when he could console and deliver. He forgot his hunger and his exhaustion to announce the kingdom of God to a poor anguished soul; he did not hesitate to undergo all perils in order to bring divine succor to his afflicted friends in Bethany. Nothing turned him aside from doing good, not even the announcement that his mother and his brethren were seeking him. He subordinated his natural affections, like the wants

of his body, to the fulfillment of his mission of love. We feel that he had given himself away without reservation. His charity extended even to immolation, the unceasing immolation of himself; he regarded himself, from the beginning to the end of his life, as the holy victim of love. He gave up not only all his days, not only his hours of repose, not only the hours in which he might have communed with his family, but also, when occasion required it, his hour of prayer, that hour of celestial refreshment, of ineffable communion with the Father. He shortened this divine and mysterious intercourse to speak to those ignorant multitudes who followed him into retired places because he had miraculously given them bread. Was there ever a self-devotion comparable to his? Be pleased to remark that we have not spoken of that sacrifice which sums up and combines all others, of that sorrow of sorrows, of that bloody immolation in which the most terrible sufferings of the body are but the feeble image of the tortures of the soul. If charity consists, as our text avers, in laying down one's life for the brethren, shall we not say, "Yes, we have perceived in him what love is, we have learned it in a manner to forget never."

We have not said all concerning the Saviour's love. His life could be the life of perfect love only by adding joy to the sacrifice; first, because a sacrifice offered in bitterness is illusory, and, further, because joy, a holy and pure joy, is inseparable from love. This dilates the soul, renders it fruitful, and responds to its highest wants. The communion of hearts in love is pre-eminently happiness. It may hence be

concluded that when joy is wanting, love is absent. It is only half sacrifices, mingled with refusal and dispute, which leave sadness after them. Complete sacrifices, proceeding from the surrender of self-will, bring with them joy; there is no mental reserve in them; they consummate our union with God. We know antecedently that Jesus Christ has entered upon an infinite joy, because his sacrifice was complete; it is an austere joy, sometimes sorrowful, but immortal. Vailed for a time, it appears again more vivid and more intense. This joy consisted at first in the consciousness of his profound union with God. Although upon the earth, he lived in God; spiritually he had not left the bosom of the Father, he had remained the only and the eternal Son. To him he referred all his thoughts, as all his works. He was one with him while remaining at the same time subject to the conditions of his human existence. He showed us by his example that there is no barrier between God and us, and that the life of prayer is a life in heaven. We may allowably represent to our minds that which our Saviour experienced when, after enduring an interview with the perverse scribe who sought to entrap him in his talk, or after having borne with the slowness of his disciples to believe and to understand, in the evening of a hard day of toil and sadness, he ascended the desert mountain, and there poured out his heart, that wounded and broken heart, into the heart of the Father. What joy can be likened to the joy of that divine effusion, of that ineffable communion? It was the consummation of their mysterious oneness. There was great

joy even in the sufferings endured by our Saviour. Did he not suffer in order to fulfill the Father's will? Were not those sufferings always love? And as he loved our poor humanity, it was not without joy that he suffered for it, for our salvation. With joy he saw in advance "of the travail of his soul;" and we doubt not that, when he cried out, before expiring on the accursed tree, "It is finished," he experienced a vast delight; for condemnation was done away, sin vanquished, and God appeased! On good grounds, then, could Jesus Christ declare to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you." It was the perfect joy of perfect love.

Humility, obedience, compassion, devotement, immolation, joy in sacrifice itself,—all these different features of charity as it is manifested here below are found in Jesus Christ. And if there is any other virtue to adore in him, it is ultimately comprehended in love. His charity is the bond of his perfections. They spring from this common foundation; it is this which constitutes their unity in their diversity. If he is gentle, like the lamb led dumb to the slaughter, and if he is at the same time strong and formidable, the secret of his gentleness and of his strength is in his love. Nothing is more gentle than love, and nothing more invincible; it is stronger than death. It seeks nothing for itself; suffering is nothing, shame is not regarded. It desires neither its own glory nor its own profit. When it is made to pass through the most terrible trial, it comes out of it more burning and more pure. Thus love explains all

contrasts in the life of Jesus Christ. He has shown us what charity is; and, since holiness and love are inseparable, we may conclude that the life of Jesus was the life of God in man.

Is there any one in this assembly who rejects this conclusion? Can this be so? Are there, then, two human consciences? What more can you need in order to adore Jesus Christ? Are you not undeceived with regard to those hypocritical virtues which sound the trumpet before themselves? Are you not wearied with those lying heroisms, those boisterous parades, the real origin of which is too well known? Does not the holiness which is humble and genuine, without show and without dissimulation, speak more powerfully to your heart? Do you not feel that there is something beyond comparison in this life and death of Christ, something so pure, so great, so divine, so ideally beautiful, that a man must either shut his eyes in order not to see it, or must fall prostrate at its feet? Forget our feeble words, place yourselves before his cross; go thither even with the prejudices attributed to you. Your prejudices can not be narrower or stronger than those of the pagan centurion who was set over the execution of our Saviour. Only imitate that man: for a few moments he contemplated the holy victim, and scarcely had he contemplated him when he smote upon his breast; he was a Christian. So much gentleness, so much calmness, in the midst of such sufferings! Words of forgiveness to his enemies! No, this is not from a man, or that man is a God. Forget also your past, your past as philosopher, disputer, and mocker. Contemplate,

contemplate Jesus dying. One hour in good faith with the cross before your eyes! We ask no more. We know that, if you do not enforce silence upon your conscience, it will repeat the centurion's cry; and were it to be still, the very stones would cry out, Yes, this man was a God.

How precious is it for us Christians, O my Saviour, in this sad world of sin and defilement, to have in thee the type of all that which is good and beautiful! What consolation for the soul bruised by so many base and miserable acts, even on the part of the best of mortals, to repose itself in adoration of thee! What joy, when the heart has had experience of deceit, or has made some mournful discovery, to behold thee with steadfast gaze, perfectly assured that from the Holy One no deceit can ever proceed! What grace in being enabled to say to one's self, This perfection of my Saviour, far from leading me to despair, should inspire in me the sweetest confidence, for it is the principle of my salvation, the pledge of my reconciliation to God, while it is also the law of my conscience, and amid the blessedness of eternity it will be fully imparted to me. "We shall be like him," says St. John, "for we shall see him as he is." What a hope, my brethren, and how can we refrain from exclaiming with the same apostle, "Let him who hath this hope purify himself, even as he is pure!"

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS CHRIST AS PROPHET.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST.

"Never man spake like this man." — John vii. 46.

AFTER having considered the nature, the plan, and the holiness of the Redeemer, after having considered what he was, what he sought to accomplish, and the spirit in which he finished his work, it remains for us to unroll this great work itself before your eyes, in order fully to apprehend its unity and its greatness. It is common to divide it into three parts, corresponding to the three great institutions of the old dispensation, — prophecy, priesthood, and kingship. In Jesus Christ we first contemplate the prophet, then the priest, and, finally, the king. We accept this division of the great subject before us; it is based upon important truth, upon the profound harmony existing between the old and new dispensations. The desire for salvation was expressed in all the institutions of the old dispensation. In the new dispensation this desire has been perfectly realized. The Redeemer is the bond of both covenants; all that can set forth this peculiarity of his mission redounds to his glory. This threefold divis-

ion of his work is not, therefore, one of those arbitrary and scholastic divisions which break up the truth into fragments, and which deprive it, at the same time, of its unity and its living reality. First, the Word was about to manifest himself to the world, to reveal himself by means of speech. Hence his prophetic work. The Word was to offer the sacrifice of redemption. Hence his work as priest. In this very sacrifice he was to triumph over sin and over death. Hence his kingship. We can not in him separate the prophet from the victim, nor the victim from the king. If he is only a prophet, he has not closed the cycle of the forerunners of the Messiah. If he is only a victim, if his sacrifice did not terminate in his kingship, it is without efficacy. And if he was no more than a king, the race of Adam would still lie under the condemnation. According to the magnificent observation of Bossuet, it is his blood in which he must gather up his crown. We shall consider in their order these three parts of the work of Jesus Christ. To-day we confine ourselves to the Messiah's prophetical work. We shall first show its necessity.

The duty of the prophet, under the old dispensation, was not restricted to prophecy properly so called; the prophet was the great witness for the truth, the revealer of God. It is in this sense that Jesus Christ is a prophet. If he had not communicated the deep import of his work in positive teachings, his work would not have been understood. For it may be said that in every important fact there is a soul and a body. The body is the fact taken in itself, separately and alone; the soul is its meaning, its scope, its spirit.

The body, the flesh, the averring of the fact, is of no value. It is the spirit which avails. But only the teaching of Jesus Christ could separate the spirit, the soul, the profound import of the event, from the event itself. The crucifixion of an innocent person was not a thing so strange and so new in the ancient world. In order to see a redemption in this, the exterior vail must be pierced through by the mind; and to effect this, I repeat it, the teaching of Christ was necessary.

This teaching, need I say, is as wonderful as the Redeemer's person. It exhibits the same contrasts, the same greatness in humility, the same depth in simplicity. It is the only teaching which is truly fruitful, ever new, and ever inexhaustible. For eighteen centuries the church has been bending over this word of the Master, over the few pages which have preserved it to us, with an ardent desire to see its depths, and to seize its ultimate import. Men of the noblest genius and the greatest saints have meditated this word, and it has always spread beyond them, and they could not apprehend all its fullness. Many systems have been constructed, many formularies have been drawn up. In these, as men have sometimes imagined, they inclosed this divine teaching; but, each in its turn, they have all been broken and consumed. And yet this teaching, with all its endless riches, is much more simple than all the imperfect images of it which have been set before us. The most learned and pious theology which has entered into the labor of centuries can not exhaust this teaching, and the humblest believer, even the merest child, when he hears it from the mouth of the Master, is penetrated and moved by it.

Why is it that men so often place themselves between the divine Teacher and us? Why are the most independent minds so frequently seen manifesting a spirit of servility in this respect, and accepting as the teaching of Jesus Christ that which is but a lamentable perversion of his teaching? How few are they who have truly listened to the Master in his own cause, and who are not content to receive certain ecclesiastical or theological traditions! It is the fact that the greater part of mankind have read only a translation of the gospel, — I am not speaking of words, but of thoughts. The gospel is constantly coming into our hands translated, enfeebled, transformed by human theology. And it is because they will not go back to the original, because they will not read it in good faith and with simplicity, and not by the light of particular doctrines that belittle and pervert it, that the Christian system is to-day still rejected by so many sober and earnest minds. They fancy that they have intelligently decided against it, but in truth they have not even discerned it in its divine beauty. Might it please God to enable us to dissipate, in regard to many, this deplorable misconception, by faithfully presenting to them the teaching of Jesus Christ!

This subject contains, also, a precious admonition for you, Christians. You are called upon to glorify the gospel by your testimony. You are therefore called upon to teach as Christ taught. Learn of him how a man can be a perfect witness for the gospel; learn where lies hidden the nerve of Christian speech, and in what manner, under relations the most diverse, — whether condemnation or comfort, conflict or persua-

sion, pathos or terror, be required, — the truth may be wielded most worthily and effectually.

"Never man spake like this man." This was said of Jesus Christ, even by his enemies. Nothing could more plainly prove that his teaching is perfect, like his life. We shall examine it both with regard to its object and its form, and will show you, in this double point of view, that never man taught, never man spoke, like Jesus Christ.

There is a sense in which, first of all, Jesus Christ taught as man never teaches. His teaching is distinguishable from all others in that he was himself the object of his teaching. A master, a teacher, were he the greatest of all, holds forth truth, but he is not truth. He points out the way to it, he leads one to feel in advance the efficacy of truth. Jesus Christ alone could say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." It is one of the strangest words that ever proceeded from his mouth, one of the most mysterious, and also one of the most characteristic. That man has understood nothing of Christianity who, in the teaching of Jesus Christ, is seeking for anything but Christ himself, and who asks of him a doctrine or truth of which Christ is not the substance, but simply the witness. I know well that this identification of Christianity with Jesus Christ has been abused sometimes, and men have made use of it in order to reduce the gospel to a powerless sentimentalism, or to an enervated mysticism, and in order to set themselves against a clear and positive exhibition of the law. But everything depends on the manner in which the Saviour is contemplated. If only vague ideas are en-

tertained with regard to his person, if men see in his person nothing but a bare ideal of human nature, if his redemptive work is rejected, it is in vain to pretend that everything is made to rest upon him as the foundation; such will build upon a cloud, because they build not truly upon Jesus Christ. We freely admit that the name of Jesus Christ may be lavishly employed, while men at the same time are laboring against him, and in ignorance of him. It is not enough to have for him a certain attraction of the heart. That attraction can exist without the possession of true faith, because it may be so confused, so intermingled with other things, as in no respect to resemble a firm and assured belief. The apostles experienced this attraction even before they understood the work of their Master, before they were converted. St. John, leaning on the bosom of Jesus, during the solemn passover feast, felt it in the highest degree; and yet at that very hour he had not a sufficing faith, a faith enlightened and abiding. It was a precious beginning; it was the germinant point of a really strong and living belief, but it was nothing more. There would be danger, then, in affirming in terms too general that one's relation to Jesus Christ constitutes the whole of religion. It ought to be understood, and clearly set forth, that this relation to Christ does not consist merely in the soul's being drawn to him, but there is also implied in it the conscious acceptance of the truth as it is in Jesus.

With this reservation, we maintain that Christianity exists entirely in Jesus Christ; we maintain that, outside of his person, there exist no Christian dogmatics.

His person is itself our dogmatic system. He taught no other, nor did his apostles. Apostolic teaching was nothing else but the reproduction, or the inspired interpretation, of Christ's teaching, and Christ's teaching had no other object than himself. Christianity is, first of all, neither a doctrine nor a book; it is a fact, or rather it is a person. This sacred Person is known only through the inspired Book; doctrine is his image formed in the understanding; but, antecedently to the Book and to the doctrine, there exists the living reality. Without the testimony of the apostles it is impossible to know Christ; without doctrine we can not arrive at precision of belief. The apostolic testimony and the doctrine are indispensable in our view; therein we see the sacred vessel which contains within it the divine treasure. But the vessel is not the treasure; the treasure is not the vessel; the container is not the thing contained; Christianity is not essentially a compound of holy oracles, or a divine theology a dogmatic system. Or, if it is a theology, it is not one after the manner of men, but after the manner of God: the theology of men is a laborious concatenation of ideas and words respecting God; the theology of God is his own Word concerning himself, a living and operative Word, the Word that became flesh. "The mystery of godliness is great," says St. Paul; "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." 1 Tim. iii. 16. Such is the divine theology. It is this which enabled Jesus Christ to say, "I am the truth." Show us a single truth which is not connected in the most natural way

with this living truth. The two terms of the religious problem are God and man. To know these, to know their true relations, is to know all religious truth. "Show us the Father," said an apostle to Jesus Christ; and the Master answered, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." All that we can know concerning God Jesus Christ has taught us, or rather he has shown it to us. The Father was in him. All his perfections, his righteousness, his holiness, his power, shone forth in his person with softened rays, and his love had never assumed a sublimer manifestation. In like manner the Son represented the Father's works; the creation of the world, and all the series of divine revelations, were attributable to him as being eminently the organ of Omnipotence. Thus all which we have need to know respecting man, his true nature, his high destiny, we perceive in Him who was perfect man. Not only does he teach us to know God and man, he moreover reveals to us their true relations. Is he not the mediator between humanity and its Creator? On the one hand, by the very fact of mediation, he manifests man's fall and man's inability to save himself; and, on the other hand, he teaches the world the Father's love, who so loved the world that he gave his Son, in order that whosoever should believe on him might not perish, but have eternal life. What can we know with regard to the work of salvation that is not directly connected with the person of Jesus Christ? He was made unto us, says the apostle, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. To take up one of the specifications in this passage, do we not see that Christian morality, by means of sanctification, is

to be wholly referred to him? And with respect to that which concerns the future, does not all depend upon him? Is it not he who shall raise the dead, judge the world in righteousness, and lead his own to glory? Is it not he, finally, who has promised and given us the Holy Spirit? Sin, grace, redemption, holiness, resurrection, judgment, — have all these divine doctrines any meaning apart from Christ? Are we not authorized to say with St. Paul, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified;" with St. John, "He that hath the Son hath life;" and with the Son himself, "He who believeth in me shall not perish"? We must not only believe what he teaches, but also believe in him. His teaching is, after all, but the imprinted image of his person, as it is the image of his Father. Let us take heed that our abstractions do not dry up this living instruction. Let us fear that this living water, through our fault, be changed into ice, and become like a solid crystal, shaped into forms rigidly fixed and symmetrical. Let us remember that every doctrine isolated from Jesus Christ is by that very act smitten with barrenness, and that the Christian teaching which is not a communication of Christ loses its proper character, and is nothing more than a human philosophy. Let us not, by adopting any new kind of scholasticism, give stones for bread to famished souls, and let us remember that the bread which nourishes to-day, as it was eighteen centuries ago, is the living bread which came down from heaven. Never, therefore, has man spoken like this man, because never

could man present himself as the truth in his own person.

The incomparable excellence of Christ's teaching appears, also, in the form, in the perfect form, of his discourse. In what does this perfection consist? Speech is the revelation of the soul. It expresses the different convictions of the soul. Speech would be truly perfect if it were a true mirror of our thoughts and of our impressions, or rather a reflection identical with the beam from which it darted forth. We can ask nothing more from a revelation than to reproduce fully the hidden things, the knowledge of which it seeks to impart. Speech in its relation to God is an eternal reproduction of his being, the imprinted image of his person; and for that reason it is perfect, like all which proceedeth from him. The perfection of human speech will be measured, then, by the fidelity with which it shall manifest the soul of man. I say the soul, because the question does not here mainly concern the thought. A man may be endowed with the precious faculty of expressing his ideas with eloquence, of imparting to them a pure, beautiful, and transparent form, and yet his speech be, after all, but a brilliant lie. This is because the center of man's life is not in his understanding, but in his heart. If our speech is in disharmony with our moral state, whatever may be its beauty, it is counterfeit, like counterfeit coin; it sounds hollow, so to say. Not only is it false and hypocritical, but it has no worth, and ultimately no influence. One quickly perceives, without fully accounting for the fact, that it is wanting in earnestness. Thanks be to

God, great words, great expressions, are speedily worn out. It is but a thin vail which the least wind raises or rends. There is nothing truly powerful except sincerity. A word perfectly sincere is a perfect word; and it is such only when one can say, Like word, like life. Then each word comes to us nourished, penetrated with the inner sap. It is not an empty sign, it is a reality, a verb;* and although it should be devoid of elegance and harmony, not the less would it go on its way and reach its end. Coming from the heart, it speaks to the heart.

If it be thus, my brethren, — if sincerity is the seal of perfection as respects human speech, — it is easy for us to justify our text, "Never man spake like this man," for never was man sincere like Jesus Christ; by which we understand that never did man place his word so completely in harmony with his life. Jesus Christ lived out his word, and spake out his life. To say that his speech was sincere, is to say too little; for there is an absolute identity between his acts and his discourse. His teaching, as well as his works, depict him to our eyes. To prove to you the excellence and the perfection of this teaching, we shall have, therefore, only to exhibit to you the identity between his speech and his life. The life of Jesus Christ was the perfect life of charity. We shall show that his speech was the perfect language of divine love.

We have seen in our last discourse that our Saviour's charity rested upon his humility. His word was as humble as his life. Never man spake like this man in the particular of humility. Compare

* Verbum.

the divine Master with the doctors of his times. They either spoke with the tone of despotic authority, or they wrapped themselves up in a pompous gravity. They spoke, we are told, from the hight of Moses' seat: we think we can see them on that elevated seat, holding the people captive at their feet, binding on them their interpretations, and presenting themselves as rigid guardians of tradition. They spoke of God solely in holy places and in consecrated forms. Their teaching was like their persons. Just as they sought to inspire respect by their long robes and their phylacteries, so they strove to impress a commanding dignity upon their speech. It also was wont to trail after it a sacerdotal robe. It reverberated like the voice of the temple itself. What a contrast between these proud doctors and the lowly Master of Nazareth! He did not seat himself upon the benches of the Jewish schools. He has not in his favor the repute of official titles, which always impart some luster to those who are invested with them. He does not speak from the seat of Moses; he speaks in the market-places, and in the streets, beside a well of living water, upon the mountain or the shore of the lake, wherever the multitudes are gathered together. His teaching does not possess the majesty of a venerable tradition. It imposes itself upon no one; it renders homage to the truth without applying any pressure of any kind, without assuming that accent of command which often by itself acts upon minds with so great power. What more simple than his speech! It is stripped of every solemn form; he derives the profoundest instruction from the most ordinary incidents

of every-day life; they are stamped with a familiarity which can not be feigned. Let us venture the remark, no doctor has employed a speech more *laical* than that of Jesus Christ, and to such an extent that the name of doctor could not be applied to him. He spoke as a friend speaks to his friend, as a mother speaks to her son, in brief and striking words. You will no more find in him the elegance and the dialectics of Grecian teachers than the gravity of Jewish scribes. Socrates and Plato taught with the most exquisite art; they did not possess the magisterial authority of the doctors at Jerusalem, and they made good the want of it by harmony and beauty of language, by splendor of imagery, and that logical concatenation of thoughts whose austere charm is sensibly felt by the mind. There is nothing like this in the discourses of Jesus Christ. To say of him that he had eloquence, would be to shock Christian feeling. All premeditation in regard to form and outward beauty is absolutely foreign to his speech. "He hath not cried, nor lifted up, nor caused his voice to be heard in the streets." Isaiah liii. 2. In no sense whatever did he consider effect. We may say of his teaching, that which the prophet said of his person, There is "no form nor comeliness" in it.

The simplicity of his speech is precisely that which constitutes its perfection. The organ of eternal truth, he does not desire for his teaching either outward authority, or priestly gravity, or artistic beauty. By relying on outward authority, he would admit that his doctrine has need of some outward aid in order to triumph; by wrapping it up in solemn forms,

he would lead us to doubt of its intrinsic worth; by seeking for it artistic beauty, by clothing it in brilliant drapery, he would allow us to think that it does not possess sufficient charms to win souls. No, it was not seemly that God's truth should enter the world disguised and burdened, ready to strike those who were not fascinated by its borrowed beauty. Jesus Christ knew that nothing was so beautiful or so powerful as the truth, and he desired that she should appear alone in his teaching. Between her and us he put no authority, no solemn forms of speech, no pomp of oratory. In his word truth shines in her own native and immortal beauty.

After all, what can we compare with Christ's word? Notwithstanding its simplicity, does it not surpass all other speech? Doubtless you do not find in it the brilliant passages of Hebrew prophecy, that splendor of imagery, and that sublime lyric character which strike us in Isaiah and in Jeremiah. But this difference is itself a part of the perfection of Jesus Christ. All is equal and uniform in his discourses as in his life: mighty movements of speech imply excitement, the ravished delight of a spirit borne away from itself. He was never beside himself: it was enough for him to be himself; hence that speech, calm, profound, stamped with an august serenity, comprehending, in a word, a whole world of thought and feeling; hence that sovereign control of his thought; hence that unique and indefinable nature of his discourses which compels us to say, as we listen to him, It is the Master!

There was still another motive inclining Jesus Christ

not to imitate the doctors of his day. To speak from a hight, is to speak from a distance. Men imagine that they will be listened to more attentively if they place themselves at a great distance from their hearers, in an authoritative attitude. It is a great mistake. The more simple your speech, the more powerful; the more powerful it is, the more of a sympathizing character will it possess, and a happier adaptation to the wants of your hearers. In proportion as one rises higher in the seat of the scribes, in that very proportion does he separate himself from souls. Every new step of elevation increases the distance between you and them; your teaching becomes general, abstract, pompous, devoid of application. Your darts thrown from too great a distance reach no one. It is then easy to understand that Jesus Christ should leave in Moses' seat those cold doctors who had nothing to say to poor sinners. He who had a word of eternal life to bring to them took good heed not to ascend into that seat. He spoke to man, mouth to mouth, heart to heart, and he was understood. If Christian testimony is so often shorn of its primitive force, let it be well considered that the cause of this weakness is to be found in the fact that again the witness has been placed on that lamentable hight, as it were, between heaven and earth. In every imaginable way men have sought to show plainly that his was an exceptional character. They have even made use of such symbols as were best suited to develop this deplorable prejudice in the minds of Christian people. A solemn vestment has been given to the witness of the truth for the hour of worship, in order to invite him to wrap up his speech

in a similar vestment. Academic language has taken the place of the manly and resonant language of earnest conviction. From the cold hights of the religious discourse to the souls of the hearers, the distance was so great that Christian feeling, which came, perhaps, with warmth from the soul of the orator, had time to grow cold again. Let the preacher at length renounce this elevation, which isolates him from men; let him imitate the Saviour; let him speak instead of preach; let men feel in him a companion in conflict and suffering, rather than a master and a doctor. For him, as for Jesus Christ, the secret of power is in simplicity. And when I speak of simplicity, I do not mean negligence. Noble and true simplicity is secured at the price of greater toil of soul and of thought, and of more intense meditation, than splendor of style requires. It is more difficult to furnish the substantial basis of Christian truth, than to multiply oratorical forms of speech. In this respect, as in all others, let us be the disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us learn from him that humility in Christian witness-bearing which is the pledge of its real authority. Let us rend our phylacteries at the thought of so many souls that have need of consolation; let us cease speaking foreign tongues; and let us come down from the seat of Moses for ever; that is to say, let us abandon chilling solemnity and sacerdotal eloquence.

These reflections lead us quite naturally to consider the teaching of Jesus Christ not only in reference to his humility, but also his charity. These two particulars are closely connected, as we have perceived in speaking of the holiness of our Saviour. Humility is the

beginning or the condition of love. The teaching of Jesus Christ was full of charity because it was full of humility. In our last discourse we have shown that charity is especially characterized by compassion, by love of the unfortunate, the weak, and the poor. As regards teaching, he is the weak and the poor man who is without cultivation, who is rough and plain, one of the mass of men. The compassionate nature of Christ's teaching is shown in its popular character. It is admirably adapted to the wants of the great multitude, to the wants of the ignorant and the simple. The considerations which we have already urged concerning the teaching of Jesus Christ would alone suffice to establish the eminently popular character of his word. Is it not evident that a doctrine which terminates in a divine history, and every dogma of which has its basis in a fact, will be vastly more popular than a system drawn up and arranged in a learned manner? The simple have need to say, Our eyes have seen, our hands have touched the truth. Living and incarnate truth alone can seize them and win them. On the one hand, humble and unassuming speech, divested of the solemnity of forms, has more power and authority than any other, even over cultivated hearers; much more, then, shall it prevail with the ignorant and the poor in spirit. To any other teaching they would be inaccessible. The popular character of our Lord's speech flows, then, directly from his humility.

That results, also, from the fact that he never admitted the distinction between the profane and the initiated which is found invariably in the religions of antiquity and in human philosophies. It is known that

Greek philosophers had two circles of hearers; the uninitiated hearers, to whom they imparted only the external side of their system, and the initiated, to whom they disclosed the depths of their thought. Much regard was paid, in antiquity, to this aristocracy of intelligence. There is nothing resembling this in the school of Jesus Christ. All those who wish to listen to him, who desire to become his disciples, are alike made welcome, and to all he reveals the entire truth. Those only remain without who voluntarily exclude themselves, but whoever draws nigh to him becomes his disciple; the rudest, the most uncultivated man is admitted on the same footing with the most intelligent. The gentle Master takes him by the hand to lead him into the sanctuary, and, if need be, he carries him thither in his arms, as the little child that can not walk is carried. Jesus Christ taught in open day, without calculation and without reticence. The doctrine which he teaches is the monopoly of no caste, it is offered to all men. He has hidden nothing because he had nothing to hide; he confided no secret to his apostles; he desires that all which he had spoken should be proclaimed on the housetops, because it is all necessary to be known. To allege that certain men only are initiated into the greatest mysteries of the gospel, to the exclusion of the mass of Christian people who are regarded as profane, is overthrowing the Christian economy; it is moreover giving men reason to believe that the gospel is afraid of light. Greece kept its mysteries in darkness, and it did well. Jesus Christ had nothing to withdraw from the observation of any man; therefore he spoke openly.

Not only did he refuse to admit the distinction between the profane and the initiated, but, furthermore, his thoughts were specially turned to the profane of the ancient philosophy; that is to say, to ignorant and simple men. Not that he rejected cultivated intellects, but he knew that the deepest wants of our nature are disclosed with more singleness of mind on the part of those who are not able to disguise them with the refinements of civilization. To satisfy the soul of the simple and ignorant man is to satisfy the human soul itself; what seizes it, touches it, convinces it, is very certainly suited to the needs of all. The doctrine which is adapted to the poor is a universal truth, whilst a doctrine may please the rich and the learned, and be only a passing fantasy of the mind. Jesus Christ would therefore speak to the people without fear of limiting his mission. Who did ever speak to them as the Saviour spoke? Who has ever known so well the road to their hearts? Who has ever presented the truth in a clearer and more attractive form?

Be careful to observe that in bringing the truth near the feeblest intellect in such a way as to be apprehended by it, Jesus Christ took nothing from the truth itself; he made it undergo no change whatever. It is very easy to conciliate the good-will of men when their prejudices or their errors are flattered; but the popularity bought at such a price is a betrayal of the cause of God. Jesus Christ never employed that detestable system of accommodation which claims the right of using evil in the service of good. No, no; he did not seek to gain a surreptitious admission for truth into the heart of man, as a traitor is slipped into a city in dis-

guise and under a feigned name. He has shown us by his example that the means employed by us ought always to be worthy of the end pursued, that pious frauds contain the worst impieties, and that truth can no more be served by falsehood than light can be produced by darkness. Only the most entire loyalty in spiritual things is blessed of God. Tricks, and even skill that is nicely studied, offend him; the only policy of the Christian consists in having none. Nothing disconcerts cunning adversaries like perfect simplicity, because this can not enter into their plans, and it astonishes them as something wholly unlooked for. Rectitude is so inherent in Christianity that the world itself has understood it; and therefore, when it has seen the professed disciples of Christ endeavoring to serve him in the crooked paths of human policy, it has manifested as lively an indignation as if this were the first time that trickery had appeared on the earth. It is because cunning, when men affect to place it under the shelter of Christ's name, is a thing so monstrous that even the least enlightened conscience is bound to shudder at it.

Since our divine Master rejected all accommodation in his teaching, we can explain its popular character only by the form in which it pleased him to set it forth. He found means always to connect the truth with some sentiment, idea, or fact in harmony with it; with skillful and delicate hand he ingrafted it upon the soul of his hearers, discerning with his luminous vision its precise point of contact. It sufficed for the dove, when it left the ark, to find one green branch lifted out of the waters, in order to secure a resting-place for itself; in like manner it sufficed the eternal

truth which was in Jesus Christ to find a single point of connection with the soul or spirit of man, in order to penetrate it and become established within. In the midst of the ruins heaped up by the Fall, the Saviour discerned, at the first glance of his eye, upon what stone he could rebuild the dismantled edifice. Thus he constantly made appeals to conscience, to the sense of sin, to the need of deliverance, to the sorrow and the suffering inseparable from human life. Call to mind the opening of his sermon on the mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," "Blessed are they that mourn," "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness." Poverty really felt, sorrow for sin, thirst for salvation, were found in every just and lowly soul, and, beginning with this, Jesus Christ proceeded gradually to raise it to the highest summits of his doctrine.

He was not satisfied with relying upon those general dispositions more or less common to all well-intioned men. He knew that which each one of them needed; and he addressed to every man precisely the word that was made for him. Run over in your minds the narrative given by our evangelists; recall the interviews with our Saviour in which so many persons participated. They belong to all classes, to all positions in society. Sometimes they are members of the supreme council of the nation, like Nicodemus; sometimes they are fishermen from the Nazarene lake; sometimes they are poor women; sometimes pagans; sometimes Jews. You will not find one word which is not the most touching word, the most striking that could be pronounced in the given circum-

stances. It might even be said that the word of Jesus Christ is colored with different shades of expression, according to the calling or dominant intent of the interlocutor, or even according to the circumstances of the moment. Is he speaking to poor fishermen at the Lake of Nazareth, he employs an image borrowed from their pursuits: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Is he speaking to a doctor of the law, he keeps up an allusion to his dignity; by this means, Jesus gives him a salutary lesson of humility: "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Is he speaking to a great multitude whose hunger he has satisfied, he discourses to them of food which endureth unto everlasting life. Does he meet, in the heat of the day, near Jacob's well, a woman of Samaria, he speaks to her of the out-gushing waters of eternal life, and from this he proceeds to address a most earnest appeal to her conscience.

Does he not multiply his wonderful parables for the same purpose? The parable enfolds the highest teaching in the simplest narrative; borrowed from nature or from daily life, it raises the soul, step by step, to the eternal laws of the kingdom of God. In like manner as God under the old dispensation, according to the familiar and touching image of the prophet Isaiah, led his people gently, as one leads an animal that is descending into a plain, so Jesus Christ led his hearers with all gentleness, step by step, over the high and steep declivity of truth, by means of his parables. The sower going forth to sow, the grain of mustard-seed cast into the ground, the leaven put into the meal, good and evil trees with their diverse

fruits, the union of the vine and the branches, became transparent symbols for his divine teachings. No one of his hearers, after having listened to him, could contemplate the outward world without re-perusing, as it were, the doctrine of Christ. Nature showed it to them written in lines too striking to be forgotten; and thus, instead of turning away the soul from the truth, nature constantly brought it back to the truth. The parables which possessed the special character of a narrative produced the same effect. At the sight of a flock, how fail to remember the Good Shepherd who gives his life for the sheep? A father pressing his children in his arms would naturally think of the prodigal son and his forgiveness. The workmen laboring in a field, or in a vineyard, would remember the parable of the laborers engaged at different hours of the day. From the commonest incidents of life thought could be lifted to God; even the relations of debtors and creditors to each other were transformed into sublime types.

No, never man spake like this man, because never man has loved our poor humanity like him. Let us not deceive ourselves in this: it is the love of Jesus Christ which inspired him with his parables; it is his love for souls which led him so wonderfully to seek out the spiritual food which each one required. When love does not abound in the heart of the witness for the truth, he confines himself to teaching it with faithfulness, but does not strive to render it acceptable to his brethren; he does not search out carefully their different dispositions and their spiritual needs. Is not this, too, one of the causes of the little effect pro-

duced by our discourses? Are they not too general? Are they not wanting in direct application? When we behold our divine Saviour, rich in all the truth of God, yet striving to present it in the forms best adapted to his different hearers, we understand that the portions of truth deposited with us have but little likelihood of winning hearts so long as we present the truth to them naked and dry, and fail to show the tender solicitude of love in seeking out their hidden wounds and pouring into them the consolations of the gospel.

The teaching of Jesus Christ was full of charity in still another sense. It was essentially creative and productive for the mind of his hearers. A master, a doctor, who is not moved by love for souls, who is swayed by the desire of controlling and constraining them, is satisfied when they suffer themselves to be passively molded by him. He does not willingly tolerate spontaneity of thought on the part of his disciples. He prefers to make captives of them to adorn his triumph, and he carefully keeps them under the bondage of his system. Such was not the method of Jesus Christ. He did not set down his doctrine in formal terms, like a catechism. It would have been easy for him to do this, and to secure from his disciples the most scrupulous conformity to the letter of his teachings. But the end which he sought was far higher than this. He desired that his doctrine should penetrate through them, that they should possess a profound comprehension of it. He therefore constantly appealed to their moral forces. He did not immediately impart the whole truth to them. He par-

tially opened before their eyes the precious mine and caused the vein of pure gold to start out of the earth; but he did not bring it all forth to the light, because he wished it to be dug for and handled by persevering labor. His parables did not go beyond this; they merely allowed the treasure to be seen dimly. Those who had eyes and saw not, remained there; they waited on one side. But those who felt a sincere love for the truth hastened to dig the soil; they quickly discovered unlooked-for riches, and the efforts which they had put forth to appropriate those riches rendered them infinitely more precious.

These considerations afford us a plausible explanation of that difficult passage in the gospel, in which our Lord declares to his disciples that he speaks in parables in order that the mass of his hearers "seeing should not see, and hearing should not understand." Lazy souls which feel no desire after truth have no right to possess it. As long as they abide in this disposition, truth hides itself from them, because they deserve to be chastised for their inert passiveness and their shameful indifference to the most precious good. If the truth were imparted to them with all its evidence it would avail them nothing. It would be a pearl cast before swine. The pearl is shown to them from afar, in order to urge them to seek for it; they must then reproach themselves alone if they do not gain it, for it is offered to them as to others. Whoever, seeing it shine afar off, has busied himself in seeking for it, is sure to find it. He will find it when he shall have sold his field; that is, when all shall be subordinated to this acquisition. It is a thousand times bet-

ter that it be not given to him without demanding effort and travail on his part, since the sacrifices made by him disclose to him its worth. Now he knows what he possesses, and enjoys it the more in proportion to his greater toil in gaining it.

Jesus Christ deposited his words in the souls of his disciples, like so many living germs which should grow therein. At first his words go completely beyond them. Often, by this strange paradoxical character, they penetrate their minds, as a sharp iron enters the flesh. More than once they had occasion to cry out, "This is a hard saying: who can hear it?" But it is precisely this hardness which fixes it, and thrusts it like an arrow into the depths of their hearts. The time will come when all which the Master said to them will return to their memories, as if illumined with the light of a new day. It will be found that such a word, which at first aroused a violent opposition in their minds, has imperceptibly become, by its hidden power, under the continued operation of the Holy Ghost, the expression of their dearest convictions. In the communication of truth, Jesus Christ hastened nothing, precipitated nothing. Bringing the new covenant into the world, he did not cease faithfully to observe the old. He caused the abrogation of the Mosaic system to be perceived only in a partial manner. As he said himself, he did not wish to put the new wine into old bottles. He wished gradually to prepare the new vessel, and drop by drop he poured the new wine therein. He did not treat the soul of man and the thought of man like an earthen vessel, in which at any moment the most

precious things can be inclosed. He desired to have a kind of harmony between the vessel and the treasure. He did not regard the living organs of revelation as a piece of parchment, on which he had only to write at once his entire thought. No; he waited patiently until those poor Galilean fishermen had ripened in his school, until they had become developed and spiritualized by contact with him. With what goodness did he not endure their slowness of mind and their feeble faith! With what indulgence did he not interpret to them the simplest parables! With what love did he not correct their errors! When we think of the suffering he must have undergone, as every day he gathered new proofs of the grossness of their apprehensions and the material nature of their piety, we perceive in his patience one of the most touching manifestations of his charity, especially when we compare it with the impatience continually manifested by us when called to confront prejudice or error.

Finally, my brethren, — and I close with that which is most evident, — the word of Jesus Christ was the language of perfect love, because no one has ever equaled Jesus Christ as regards the consoling power of his language. His word was the ideal fulfillment of that command: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people." All his discourses can be summed up in this one appeal: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." He comforted humanity in general by speaking to it divinely of the Father's love: "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." He comforted all the afflicted: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." He comforted repentant souls by say-

ing to each one of them, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee." He comforted his disciples, his friends, in those last discourses whose inimitable sweetness, tender sadness, and divine depth can not possibly be expressed, and in which his whole heart seems to be thrown open. Nailed to the cross, he still comforted them, and his last word was a word of holy love for his mother and his own. "Never man spake like this man."

Having reached the end of this discourse, I am far from having exhausted this vast subject. Jesus Christ has not only taught, he was called also to combat by his word; he was set to defend his doctrine; and he has given us an example of the manner in which we ought to defend the truth. We shall have, therefore, to speak to you of Christ's apologetics, and of his miracles, which form a part of it. We shall recognize again in this that attribute of holiness which his teaching has so signally revealed.

"Never man spake like this man," because never did man speak like him the language of charity. But in vain had he spoken this divine language if he had not lived the holy life of love. In the agreement between his life and his word, an agreement which we have shown to be complete, lies the great power of our Saviour. Does not this convey to us very healthful and very humbling instruction? Do we not here find the secret of our weakness in dealing with the world? Do not attribute it to external circumstances. Do not impute it to our little knowledge. Do not seek for it in the imperfect manner in which we lisp the language of charity. Witnesses for Jesus Christ, remember your

daily life, your falls, your unbelieving, timid, selfish acts. Your life refutes your speech; it never ceases to contradict it. Even those who have never seen you receive from you nothing but an ineffectual testimony. There is an indescribable something in the soul which enables it to discern, without having clear consciousness of the fact, whether a given Christian word is or is not in disharmony with the life of him who utters it. There are men whose inward history we know not, the clasp of whose hand imparts to us something of God. A word in which there flows some degree of Christian life is immediately effectual. Powerlessness is the punishment of religious talkers. We all are talkers more or less. This sense of merited weakness constitutes the great and bitter sorrow borne by the ministry of the word. If we had truly lived that which we speak from the pulpit; if thy servants, O my God! were always full of thee when they came up into this place; if they had Christ in their hearts, as upon their lips, with what virtue would not thy word be clothed! Alas! by our want of power we can estimate our inconsistencies. This name to live, this lavish use of pious words, whilst the life is meager and poor, — this is the great misfortune of the church in our day. But, O my God! thou knowest it, we deeply groan under this guilt; we desire not to abide in this disharmony. We would speak less and act more. Ah! that the example of Him who put all his holy life into his holy word might convert us to that perfect sincerity which in every age is the hiding of the church's power!

CHAPTER IX.

JESUS CHRIST AS PROPHET.

CHRIST'S APOLOGETIC: — THE SCRIPTURES. — MIRACLES. — INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

John v. 36–45.

JESUS Christ taught mankind. We showed in our last discourse that he taught with that perfection which pertaineth only to himself. But he did not confine himself to setting forth the truth of God. He defended that truth, he established it victoriously, notwithstanding the strongest objections. It is important for us to gain an exact and full idea of his apologetic. We must know on what basis the divine Founder of man's ultimate religion rested the certainty of Christian truth. This is necessary for a twofold purpose: whether to secure the peace of our own hearts and our own thoughts, or to teach us how to exhibit the gospel in its most attractive aspect. What Christian is there who is not acquainted with temptations to doubt? Where is the believer who has never perceived a cloud coming over his faith? Upon what unknown and ever cloudless hights does he dwell? We are tempted in all things; why should we not be in our faith? It is to be strengthened by contest; it must manifest its inner power in

the collision of ideas the most hostile to it. Let us not ask that it be spared contest; this would be asking that it be deprived of its triumph, for there is no victory without contest and without danger. Moreover, it is salutary to know that we are vulnerable at every point, in order to turn continually to the divine Physician of the soul. Whatever may be the value of these considerations, it is not the less true that the Christian is often assailed by doubt, and that sometimes a somber night envelops him in its cold shadows, like those thick fogs which in a moment darken the sky. Let it not be imagined that doubt is the fruit solely of laborious and fatiguing thought, and that it is enough to secure exemption from its attacks if one does not stir the great questions of Christian theology. Often in the most blessed hours its gnawing is felt; it takes delight in pursuing us when our souls are opened to the holiest emotions. It will occur in the hour of prayer; an impalpable vail will suddenly rise between us and God, and it will seem to us that our voice falls back into the void, and that no one is listening to us. It may be near the bed of death, or beside an open grave. A horrible thought will cross us, — Is there anything beyond? Ought we not to believe our eyes? It will occur on some day of peculiar joy, which appears as a foretaste of heaven. In this beautiful, peaceful Eden where we dwell for a moment, we shall hear the hissing of the serpent. We need, then, to have an immediate and victorious answer. We must know how to impose silence on the adversary, for doubt is despair, is helplessness, is defeat, and would quickly prove ruin

if it were not torn from the heart. Jesus Christ will teach us, by his divine apologetic, how we can destroy it by a word, and regain the blessed assurance of faith. Our subject, therefore, concerns all Christians. May they seek in it the consolations and the strength which are necessary for them! For the hour of doubt will strike sooner or later for every man.

Besides, my brethren, we have to plead the great cause of Jesus Christ before the world. We must give an account of our faith. Christianity was never more misconceived than in our days. I will say more, — never has it been worse defended by certain religious parties. That is one of the most serious perils of the church; it is not only attacked by anti-Christianity, it is still more compromised by a spurious Christianity. Unfortunately there are to-day men so imprudent or absurd as to declare that Christ's doctrine, in order to its establishment or propagation, demands the use of force. It is the same with declaring that the cause of the gospel is lost; for to have recourse to compulsion with regard to a doctrine is to avow moral impotence. Men strike only when they are unable to answer; and the aid of outward force is solicited only when persuasion is given up in despair. Defenses of this gross and disastrous kind would long ago have ruined Christianity, if it were possible for our faults to ruin it. We can not disguise the fact that a great number of earnest-minded men have taken Romanism at its word, and imagine that it is really impossible to demonstrate Christian truth. We shall bring them back, my brethren, only by proving the contrary.

Never was it more necessary for Christians to form a truly militant host, and all combined to maintain the truth of the gospel. If they rely for the discharge of this duty upon the few men who seem more especially called to it, if the defense of Christianity becomes a function of office, we may regard the battle as lost; for we have arrived at one of those periods when, in order to defend the sacred soil intrusted to us, the regular army will not suffice, when against the embodied hosts of unbellef we need to summon into the field the entire body of believers. Let every Christian learn, then, to wield the holy weapons of Christian apologetic, so that it shall be fully understood that the field most suitable for us is that of free persuasion, and that it is not just to charge upon Christianity the cowardly discouragement felt by those who favor religious persecution!

Perhaps some one of my hearers sees not without fear the attempt to demonstrate the truth of the gospel. Too often a degree of skepticism is hidden under the appearance of faith, and one imagines that he is laying more firmly the foundations of faith, because he is seeking to establish the incurable darkening of our understanding. Doubtless St. Paul's word in regard to the foolishness of the cross will be urged against us. We answer, that we fully admit that foolishness of the cross; we confess that men do not arrive at the knowledge of revelation by syllogisms; but whatever foolishness it may be in this point of view, it is not the less the wisdom of God; and if it is the wisdom of God, it follows that it can be demonstrated to that extent in which anything of

God is preserved in man. We must be logical: either declare that man is no longer in any sense the child of God, and then cease to play a ridiculous farce in pretending to use efforts to convince him; in silence wait for the mystic illumination of his mind; or acknowledge that, notwithstanding the Fall, there is an indestructible relation between him and God, and then strive to bring his soul into contact with revelation. In other terms, say with us that a defense of Christianity is possible and is necessary. And how can one fail to be persuaded of this, when the church is seen from age to age proving her right, and establishing it against the most diverse attacks, when especially she receives the first of her apologies from the lips of the Saviour himself? He had neither your timidity, nor your scruples, nor your fearful theology. He no more desired the timid obscurantism of certain evangelical Christians in our day, than outward compulsion. He said to his cotemporaries, and through them to all men, Examine my doctrine. He had confidence in the result of such examination. Doubtless he did not think that the whole world would adopt his teachings. He knew too well what impure motives so often shut the heart against moral evidence. But he knew with certainty that he had given sufficient reasons for believing to well-disposed minds. Let us add, that his apologetic was popular, like his teaching, and that, consequently, he required from no one the exercise of a blind faith.

It is time, my brethren, to consider this apologetic of Jesus in itself. The text which I have selected presents it to us in its essential characteristics. The

words related to us by St. John were uttered in connection with the first discussion between our Lord and the Jews. The question controverted between them was precisely the great question in every defense of Christianity, — Was Jesus Christ, yea or nay, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Son of God? This question cleared up, and all others are settled at the same time. This is the question; between unbelief and the church there is no other, or at least all others flow from this. Jesus Christ establishes his divine mission against opposers by a collection of proofs which can not be too highly admired. He shows it by the testimony of the Scriptures: "Search the Scriptures; they testify of me." He appeals to his miracles: "The works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." And, finally, he appeals to the souls of his hearers: "How can ye believe which receive honor one of another?" These proofs, we say, are admirable, because, in the first place, they are derived from the very nature of Christianity. Jesus Christ does not demonstrate it as men demonstrate a simple fact in science or history, or a philosophical doctrine, or a mathematical problem. His demonstration is wonderfully adapted to his purpose. He traces and defines the true field of religious discussion. His apologetic is furthermore admirable in not being exclusive. He confines himself neither to external evidence nor to internal evidence. He embraces them both; he overlooks no means of penetrating into the besieged place. He begins by seizing upon the outward inclosure, by means of the historical evidence; but he goes farther: he crosses this; he stops only when he has reached the

citadel. He is not satisfied with becoming master of the house in which the strong man dwells. He ties him, he puts chains upon him. To speak without a figure, he moves and convinces the mind, but believes himself to have accomplished nothing so long as he has not reached the heart with his words. The Scriptural proof, the evidence drawn from miracles, appear to him necessary, but insufficient, and he crowns them with the moral proof, which drives the adversary into his stronghold, into his innermost defense, and converts a captive and vanquished man into a willing ally; that is to say, a believer and a disciple. More than this, the moral argument is exhibited to us as the necessary auxiliary of the Scriptural argument and the argument drawn from miracles.

Jesus Christ, first of all, rested upon the *Scriptures*. This kind of argument could not be employed in the same manner with Jews and with Gentiles. The former admitted the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and it sufficed to deduce from this sacred premise the legitimate consequences; the latter did not believe in the holy oracles, and it was necessary to establish their divine character, if any conclusion whatever was to be drawn from them. We perceive, then, that the Scriptural argument is more or less modified according to the different cases to which it is applied. Let us first consider the manner in which the Saviour presented it to the Jews. This side of his apologetic concerns all those who receive the biblical revelation as a whole. "The Scriptures testify of me," says Jesus Christ. If these Scriptures contain the word of God, as you believe, is it not evident that their testimony is decisive,

and that if it is in my favor they completely demonstrate my divine mission? Search, then, now, from the first page to the last, and you will perceive that throughout they have had me in view. There is not a promise which does not concern me, not a revelation of which I am not the end and the fulfillment. It is written, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." Isa. xlv. 25. Who thus far hath realized for us this hope of restoration, glory, and happiness? It must needs be that some one should come to keep this promise, which is substantially the promise of salvation. Here am I to fulfill it. It is written, "He shall grow up as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form nor comeliness." Isa. liii. 2. Do you not here recognize that which every day you despise in me? and does not the scorn with which you cover me become the seal of my Messianic dignity, since it was announced beforehand by the prophets? It is written, "Behold my servant. He shall not cry. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." Isa. xlii. 1, 2, 3. Who before me has united this gentleness and this holiness, such judgment with such compassion? It is written, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." Isa. lxii. 1. Around whom gather the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, if not around me? Upon whom as upon me has rested the spirit of wisdom and the spirit of power, promised to the Messiah? Spirit of wisdom! I call to witness the crowds that hung upon my lips to

gather up my words. Spirit of power! I call to witness, to use the language of the prophet, the lame man leaping like a deer, the blind recovering his sight, and the deaf man his hearing. You will read over by a new light the mysterious words that speak of my sufferings: "The Son of man must be lifted up." Finally, the last of your prophets, he who brought to you a living echo of the revelation, that had been silent for so many ages, did he not say, in the name of all your saints and of all your seers, "Behold him who should come"? Take out of your Scriptures my person, and they have no longer any meaning; they are but scattered torches they are blown about by the wind, like the dried leaves of a dead tree. I am the bond which forms these into an harmonious whole. They compose, as it were, a chorus of witnesses that have sung my praises, and whose imposing unanimity marks me out for your adoration. "It is your Scriptures that testify of me."

Such was the Scriptural proof exhibited to the Jews. And yet, notwithstanding its clearness, it was not conclusive, except as they searched the Scriptures, as they penetrated their inward meaning, and reached into the spiritual depth of revelation. The words taken in themselves avail nothing so long as one has not inhaled the divine breath inclosed in them, the spirit by which they are animated. Men make what they wish out of them; they wheel into the meaning of their own pre-conceived notions, whenever their true inner sense has not been carefully sought out. A mournful and striking example of this we have in the Jews to whom our Saviour spoke. They had

the words of God: what am I saying? they had the letters. They counted them, so that not one should be wanting, and yet they did not possess the word of God. They had the skeleton or the corpse of the word; they had never contemplated it in its beauty. They read the word constantly, they made the temple vaults re-echo its sacred sounds, at the close of every Sabbath they imagined they knew it better than before, and in truth they had not comprehended it. The words had vibrated in the air, and were lost there. The word of God, to those hypocrites and materialists, was like Jesus Christ before Herod, — it was dumb; for the most beautiful portions of the Scriptures, when read without emotion and without prayer, no longer give forth the thought of God; they are unintelligible oracles. That absolute unintelligibleness which is the punishment of religious indifference may be regarded as silence on the part of the divine word. Thus, what happened in that day. The scribes, who not only studied but copied the Scriptures without neglecting a single stroke of a letter, read, as it passed through their hands, a Bible falsified as regards its spirit in a Bible scrupulously exact as regards the letter. There they found their prejudices and their passions, a temporal Messiah and a terrestrial glory; just as the very same letters can enter into the most varied combinations, so the words of the Bible in their hands served to express the precise contrary of revelation. With marvelous address they set texts in order, and covered themselves with dead literalism as with an impenetrable buckler against the arrows of truth. They opposed the letter to the sharp incision of God's

word, and, if one might use the figure, they dulled the sword of the Spirit against its own scabbard, to prevent its piercing their hearts. Ah! doubtless the words are precious, they are indispensable; without them God's thought can not be grasped; but if they are not studied and pondered in good faith, it is very easy to turn them against Jesus Christ. Satan himself knows how to make use of them, and when he finds it necessary he cites with most scrupulous exactness the letter of the Scriptures. It does not suffice, therefore, to scrutinize them, like the Jew; they must be apprehended by the spirit. He who thus seizes on them no longer sees in them scattered fragments; they no longer constitute for him a kind of wonderful mosaic without unity. They do not contain merely a succession of verses and passages. They form a whole, a living organism. Doubtless no investigation ever goes to the bottom of the Scriptures, but yet it is possible to reach to the heart of the Bible, whence proceed, like so many different branches, the different revelations. This had been reached by the Simeons and Zachariahs, the Marys and the Elizabeths, the few just and believing souls that waited for the hope of Israel; they knew that the promise of the Saviour was the central point of the Scriptures, and their faith in the Christ was identified with their faith in the word of God. Whoever after them shall sound the sacred Book will find, like them, the shining proofs of our Saviour's mission.

The Scriptures are not simply a collection of prophecies; they are the very history of revelation; they contain the archives of the work of redemption in the

world. To every book of the Bible there corresponds some new manifestation of the power of God, some new and important act of his compassion. It might be said that every portion of the Scriptures has inaugurated a phase in the religious history of humanity. He who seizes upon them with the spirit, by this very act is learning the meaning of this history. He discerns its object and unity, and he sees not merely prophecies linked in with prophecies up to the time of Jesus Christ, but he sees facts linked in with facts, periods with periods, and the entire ancient world gravitating toward the cross of the Redeemer. That cross becomes to his eyes the pivot of all history. The sufferings and the struggles of nations, and especially the trials of the one people chosen to represent humanity before God under the old dispensation, and to furnish in its own history the key of universal history,—all these different events seem to him to terminate in the Saviour; so that were not our Saviour in the world, it would result not merely that the Scriptures were stripped of meaning, but also forty centuries of toil, of combat, and of preparation would become meaningless and absurd.

Thus, my brethren, the Scriptural argument presented to those who acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures has a value only in the degree in which they have understood the Scriptures; and as they are really understood, and their deep import apprehended, only when a desire for the truth has been experienced, and investigation has been prosecuted in an honest, earnest spirit, it follows that even the Scriptural proof must be based upon a certain correlation of the soul with revelation, upon a certain moral disposition, upon sin-

cerity and uprightness of heart. "You believe not," said our Saviour, in this very text, "because ye have not his word abiding in you." A profound remark, which would be regarded as audacious in any other mouth than the Master's; which shows us that so long as the divine word is external to us, so long as it has not penetrated us through grace, it is but a vain sound striking the air, a seeming and an illusory authority.

If now, my brethren, we consider the use that can be made of the Scriptural argument with those who do not believe in the authority of the Scriptures, we must admit that it can not be exhibited in the same manner. Too often the Scriptures are appealed to in the case of the unbeliever, as if he accepted their authority. To act thus is attempting to have a suit at law settled before a tribunal which is not recognized by one of the parties. At all hazards we must set out from a common starting-point; otherwise, we do not reach the same end, because we have not followed the same road. Not that Scriptural proof has no place in a controversy with the unbeliever, but it is essential to avoid asking of one's adversary, at the first onset, that which he can not grant. Show him in the Scriptures a simple collection of testimonies regarding the great facts of redemption; ask him to apply to these testimonies the same rules of examination as to all others. Three conditions are required of a witness before confidence is accorded to him: first, it is necessary that he has witnessed the facts; he must also be perfectly just and sincere; and, finally, have sufficient intelligence to comprehend that which he relates. Here, then, is the threefold question which you ought to set before the unbe-

liever. Were the biblical witnesses cotemporaries of Jesus Christ? are they honest men? are they intelligent?

Are they cotemporary with the facts which they relate? Press the unbeliever on this first question, and if he answers you that the gospel is a fiction invented long after the epoch to which we refer its composition, require of him the reasons for this assertion; ask him if he has made the investigation necessary to establish it, if he has examined and weighed all the different testimonies of history, and if he is well warranted in challenging them. You will be confounded at his scientific levity, and at his credulity in accepting in a mass the conclusions of a science not less frivolous than himself. You will lead him without difficulty to perceive that the denial of the authenticity of the Scriptures is a point less easy to be sustained than he had at first supposed. This will be already a first step gained, and a result not to be despised; for we ask nothing but impartiality in examining this question of authenticity. We do not fear examination. We know that in an historical point of view nothing is more solidly established than the biblical testimony regarded as a whole. We also put far from us the wholly Catholic idea which pronounces the canon a fact not to be discussed, and which interdicts conscientious inquiries with regard to such and such portions of the holy Book. This stroke of despair adopted by a theology held at bay is just suited to furnish weapons to unbelief. Thanks be to God, this is but a strange eccentricity in the history of the church. The greatest church-teachers in all ages have formally rejected it,

beginning with the Fathers and ending with the Reformers.

After having decided the first question, let us pass to the second. Are the witnesses honest? Upon this point, likewise, press the unbeliever. A knave has always some interested motive leading him to deceive us. Where can a similar motive be found on the part of the apostles? Have they flattered us? Have they soothed human pride? Strange flatterers are the men who said with one voice, "There is none righteous, no, not one,"—strange flatterers, men like Peter and Paul, who depicted in such fearful colors the corruption of mankind, and that of their own times! Did they flatter themselves, did they exhibit themselves as religious heroes? No, they brought accusations against themselves with genuine candor. Their slowness in apprehending the Master's words, their errors, their falls, their first acts of cowardice, were all avowed without concealment. Finally, these knaves must have carried their deceit very far. Falsehood commonly stops at the side of the tomb, for it no longer avails a man who is about to die; the glory of the earth vanishes from him like smoke, and he knows, then, the hour of judgment approaches. Falsehood expires upon lips already stiffening in death. If the apostles were not sincere, they lied and deceived even upon the scaffold, even beneath the executioner's sword. Let him believe it who will or can. A testimony sealed with the blood of the witnesses, a testimony which is a martyrdom, seems to us so attested as regards honesty, that to question its sincerity appears to us the hight of absurdity.

Finally, were these witnesses intelligent? did they understand that which they announced? In our view, when it relates to revelation, to be intelligent is equivalent to being inspired; for the Spirit alone searcheth the things that are of God. The question, then, takes this form: Were these witnesses inspired? To establish this, my brethren, do not lose yourselves in long disquisitions; you will not fail, doubtless, to exhibit the proof from prophecy which shows a manifest and miraculous intervention on the part of God's Spirit; exhibit, also, the incomparable unity of these books, written at different epochs, by men differing greatly among themselves; set forth the incomparable beauty of the Scriptures, in whatever point of view they are regarded. But there is a kind of argument still more effectual. Open this book, read a few pages of it; you may be sure in advance that the unbeliever is not really acquainted with it; often it is true that he has not even opened it, or, if he has opened it, he has merely run through it. Read to him, with a soul moved by the truth, some portion of the holy word, and if he does not then feel the breath of God, if he does not cry out, "God is here," it is because he is not willing to see or to understand, it is because he refuses to come to the light; and in that case you are very strong against him. You take his unbelief in the act, and you can show him that on this point, as on others, he does not believe, not because he can not, but because he will not; you are led to make a question of conscience out of a question of doctrine. Thus, whether we look at it from the point of view of him who admits the authority of the Scriptures, or regard it from the point of view of the un-

believer, the Scriptural evidence is presented before us as necessarily bringing the heart and conscience into court; developed in this manner, it is armed with divine power.

Let us take heed not to weaken it or compromise it by exaggeration. It is compromised every time that it is identified with such and such a particular theory. It is unsettling faith to say, "The Scriptural proof has no force unless it is understood precisely as we understand it; all is lost if you leave our system with regard to the Bible. Believing in its inspiration is a small matter; you must believe as we do, under penalty of giving up faith." Who are you, then, thus to confiscate the Scriptures of God, and to compel them to a disputable and adventurous theology, like all that is human and not manifestly revealed from heaven? The greatest misfortune for you, and the severest punishment of your imprudence, would be to take you at your word; for then, truly, the authority of the Scriptures which you love—but not more than we—would be shaken. You suspend it wholly on your special conceptions. Ah! the branch is too frail to bear this sacred burthen! If it were true that the least question raised with regard to a text, that the least notion differing from yours concerning inspiration, would destroy the Scriptural proof, it would have been destroyed long since, and men would have ceased to speak of it. Let us take heed, also, not to rob it of its greatest strength by petrifying the Scriptures; that is to say, by transforming the inspired witnesses into passive organs of revelation. God has revealed these things to us by his Spirit. "We believe, and therefore

speak." Let us not forsake their wide data of apostolic inspiration. Finally, let us carefully avoid falsifying Scriptural proof by using it in a fragmentary manner. Let us continually resort to the great biblical whole, to the entire body of the Scriptures; let us explore them, also, for the purposes of Christian polemics. Let us not quote them as did the rabbis, but like Christians who are thoroughly persuaded that with isolated words war can be waged against Jesus Christ as truly as in his name. Let us employ the Scriptural proof with intelligence and with spirituality; above all, let it be in our hands the sword that reaches the joints and the marrow, and it will be for us what it has ever been for the church, one of the best weapons of the Christian panoply!

We have dwelt upon the Scriptural proof on account of the frequent misconceptions to which it has been exposed. We shall be more brief on the two other proofs employed by our Lord; we now refer to miracles, and to the moral evidence. "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." I have not to demonstrate to you, my brethren, the possibility or the reality of the miracles of Jesus Christ. On the first point I will only ask you, Do you believe in God? that is to say, Do you believe in a God who is free and powerful? Then the subject of miracles offers you no difficulty. You perceive that this God who is free can intervene by his power as it pleases him, and when it pleases him, in creation, without being bound by the chain of natural causes and effects. The same hand that fastened the

first links to his throne can break it at any moment to form it anew at his pleasure. With regard to the reality of Christ's miracles, it springs from the honesty of the witnesses to his holy life; the scriptural evidence establishes it to our minds in an irrefragable manner. When we shall come to unfold before your eyes the ministry of Jesus Christ, we shall consider the divine character of his miracles. To-day I suppose them to be admitted, and I confine myself to the question, What is their value in Christ's apologetic?

And first, let us have a correct understanding with regard to the nature of a miracle. A miracle is an extraordinary fact, which, since it can not be explained by any natural cause, must be attributed to a supernatural cause. It is a direct intervention of God, who, by a sovereign act, suspends the natural law. The idea of a miracle is essentially connected with the idea of a revelation. Forgiveness itself is the first miracle; it is the most difficult of all, and after that no other ought to surprise us. After the introduction of sin the natural course of things was bringing on an absolute and universal condemnation. Forgiveness interrupted this natural course; the love of God intervened, and there took place in his heart an event unheard of, — in the rational point of view, impossible. Instead of smiting the guilty one, he pardoned him. From this first miracle flow all the others; for, in a world of sin, all that which concurs to salvation is miraculous, or contrary to the natural course of things. All revelations of God have been sovereign manifestations of his love. Particular miracles were but the beaming forth of the one essential miracle, which ever

was the fulfillment of the work of salvation. The greatest miracle, the transcendent miracle, was the person itself of Jesus Christ, for in him divine compassion fully revealed itself to destroy the fruits of sin, the natural consequences of the Fall. But this miraculous character of the person and work of Jesus Christ was to be rendered visible to men by special miracles, by works which should be its evident sign. Those works had no other aim than to bring men to Jesus Christ, who is himself the miracle incarnate.

Thus, my brethren, the works of Jesus Christ possessed a convincing efficacy only in so far as they caused his mission to be discovered and discerned, and as they led men to him. They demonstrated that he was approved of God, and that he was clothed with his power. They revealed his nature in a striking way; they were like brilliant reflections of him which struck all eyes. The individual miracle, considered exclusively as something marvelous, is of no value in the Saviour's esteem. It proves nothing conclusively, for an extraordinary operation of infernal power may be admitted. Hell can have its miracles when God suffers it. The important thing, then, is not the raw fact, so to speak, of the miracle; it is its character, its close connection with the person of Jesus Christ, which leads us to recognize his holiness. A miracle, considered in an abstract and general manner, can not be invoked as a sufficient guaranty of a doctrine, for in that case one might be made to believe in a messenger of Satan as soon as in a messenger of God. It does not produce faith. Nay, more, it hinders it, so long as it remains thus isolated, for its ap-

peal is only to that which is most external in man; it speaks solely to his eyes. A belief resting only on sight would be the opposite of faith, which is the sight of the invisible; a belief based on purely external miracles would not be superior to a belief based exclusively upon reasonings. For this cause St. Paul classes together the *Jew who asks for miracles* and the *Greek who seeks after wisdom*. The miracle which is only a wonder is not a more spiritual principle of belief than human philosophy. In the one case as in the other, man takes counsel only of sight; human wisdom is the sight of the reason, while the wonder is perceived by the bodily eye. Faith rests upon the sight of the heart and conscience. But in a miracle which is only a wonder the heart and conscience have nothing to do. Jesus Christ always refused to perform wonders. Call to mind his answer to those who said to him, "Master, we would see a sign from thee." "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." Was it possible to stigmatize more completely the seeking for the wonderful as a producing cause of belief?

The momentous fact, therefore, in the miracles of Jesus Christ is not that they be merely wonders, but that they bear the impress of his person, and that by them his person is illustrated. He does not lavish them, he does not seek to create occasions for them. He performed them through love. They are almost invariably acts of mercy, touching proofs of his compassion. And, remark it, he grants them only to faith. Dost thou believe? Such is the question which he

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puts before he performs some act of healing. "He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief." The miracle does not drive away unbelief; on the contrary, it has for its condition a certain amount of faith. "Neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." The external miracle would produce astonishment and surprise in them; but between astonishment and inward persuasion there yawns an abyss. The generation who were cotemporary with Jesus Christ were present at the most illustrious miracle of our Lord. They saw Lazarus raised again, and did not believe, because they stopped short at the wonder, and did not apprehend the divine import of the miracle. The resurrection of Jesus Christ itself stands forth in its full signification only before that mind which comprehends its vast scope with respect to the matter of salvation. The Jews knew that he had left his tomb on the third day, and not the less did they remain in their incurable unbelief.

Examine more closely the miracle wrought at Bethany. It will assist us in characterizing the works of Jesus Christ. The Master hastens to the family a few days after learning the sickness of Lazarus. Led by Martha and Mary to the sepulcher where their brother lay buried, he groaned within himself. It is through compassion, and with an emotion of tender love, that he raises the dead man. First of all, he calls upon his Father, and shows by that prayer his perfect humility. Humility and love, is not that Jesus in the entire completeness of his character? and can not we say that this miracle is a brilliant ray of his soul, while it is a new proof that the virtue of God dwelleth in him? Like

all the miracles of our Saviour, it possesses also a symbolical character. Standing beside the opened tomb, and in sight of that man raised from the dead, it is impossible not to think of the moral resurrection which Jesus Christ designs to accomplish. Everything in this miracle, as in the others, is stamped with the spirituality and the humble love of Jesus Christ. The Father by this resplendent act, as by the other works of Jesus Christ, says to men, "It is my Son; hear him." But in order to hear him, to perceive his divine lineaments, to get beyond the external wonder, we must have ears to hear and eyes to see; we must possess a degree of religious susceptibility, a certain moral disposition; and thus the miracle, like the Scriptural proof, brings us back to the moral proof. We are now to consider in what manner this has been presented by our Lord.

The forty-fourth verse of the fifth chapter of St. John sums it up in a few words: "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?" Let us endeavor fully to comprehend these words; they comprise the profoundest and most characteristic part of Christ's apologetic. According to our Lord, the great obstacle to faith on the part of the Jews is not in their understandings, but in their hearts. The cause of their unbelief is not so much a doctrinal difficulty as a moral feeling. They seek for human glory, they have regard to pride and selfishness. That prevents their discerning and accepting religious truth. Their religious touch is dulled; the light shines before their eyes and does not illume them. The practice of good-

ness would lead them to discern the true: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." By not doing the will of God, by seeking for human glory, they render themselves incapable of distinguishing divine revelation even by its surest tokens. At the base of this apologetic lies the great thought that there exists a profound affinity between the Saviour and the human conscience. Were it otherwise, of what import as regards religious conviction would be obedience or disobedience to the prescriptions of conscience? As there would be no connection between it and Jesus Christ, the greater or less observation of conscience would have no effect, whether in causing us to accept or to reject Christian doctrine. If the change in the conscience manifested by selfish seeking for human glory prevents our believing in the Saviour, we ought to infer from this that antecedently to its total perversion it possessed the capacity of believing in him, and that consequently there exists originally between it and him, as it were, a pre-established harmony. The existence of this harmony we have not now to prove. The entire series of these discourses has rested upon that firm belief. We have shown you in Jesus Christ not only the desire of the nations, but of every human soul. The religious history of man, which is the resounding echo of his conscience, has brought to us this testimony. We have seen that pagan nations, under symbols of the grossest, and often the most confused nature, expressed their desire for a divine Redeemer, and that they all celebrated the worship of the unknown God, calling upon him and invoking him in all the languages

spoken on the earth. We have seen that every man sighed after Jesus Christ. We have heard speaking in his heart that voice of God which says to him, "Seek thou my face." We have heard that voice, at first in the inward groaning, in that universal plaint which we, each in his turn, repeat, in that supplication of the condemned man who asks for a Saviour, a victim that shall deliver him from condemnation and expiate his sin. We have heard that voice in our aspirations after the good, the holy, the infinite, in our burning sighs after renewal, in our thirst after righteousness and truth, which is the thirst after God. The need of forgiveness and the need of God torment every soul of man. But the Redeemer satisfies perfectly both of these needs. He brings to us forgiveness, and he restores God to man. By forgiveness, he comforts our wretchedness; by the revelation of God, he satisfies our noblest aspirations. There exists, then, between conscience and Christ the same relation that exists between the famished body and the food prepared for it. A divine sensibility was left in it, and this is divinely re-awakened in order that conscience may recognize in him the deliverer whom she waited and asked for, though she knew him not.

The most powerful defense of the gospel will be that which, not neglecting other proofs, shall aim especially at manifesting this relation between Jesus Christ and us. It is this method which he chiefly employed, and which he has bequeathed to us as the most capable of persuading men. We therefore believe that we have done more toward establishing the truth of Christianity by setting before you the holiness of the Saviour,

than by accumulating the most learned arguments. Every right conscience must immediately acknowledge, by the light of a sudden and irresistible evidence, that he was the Christ, the Son of God. If we consult the experience of Christians, we shall see that it conclusively favors our view. I appeal to your recollections. What is that which overthrew you on your journey to Damascus? Is it external evidence? Perhaps it rendered you attentive to Christianity, perhaps it exerted a blessed influence over you, but not in that did you find the prick that pierced you, and against which you could not kick. It was not at the close of a comparative study of prophecies and miracles that you fell on your knees before the cross. It was not at the termination of a patient, logical deduction that you gave up your arms. You had not the leisure to weigh the arguments for and against the gospel in the balances of your understanding. A divine hero, like the great Roman general spoken of in history, threw his sword into one of the scales; that is to say, his piercing word seized upon you, subdued you, penetrated you before the conclusion of your syllogism. Suddenly you felt your nothingness and his power, your sins and his love. A vivid flash of lightning illumed your night. It lighted up for you the divine form of Jesus Christ. He appeared to you as your Saviour, you understood that he alone would listen to the desire of your heart, and you threw yourself at his feet, crying out, "My Lord and my God!"

Whence comes it, my brethren, that this moral evidence of the gospel is so rarely felt in this manner? Our text explains it to us. The conscience is the in-

ward eye; but we are too often interested not to see, and we willingly close it. Jesus Christ is not only our Saviour, he is also our pattern. He asks of us holiness. And this it is which affrights and irritates the sinner. So long as he will persevere in sin, he fears to be enlightened; and, fearing to be enlightened, he flees the light. He does more than this, for it is difficult to fly from the light. He becomes blind, he willingly blinds himself. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." On the part of the unbeliever, his choice is made not to see. The farther he plunges into sin, the more does he love and seek for the darkness. By degrees his conscience becomes entirely changed; just as the eye can not perceive the light when there is no longer an affinity between it and the rays of the sun, so the conscience can not perceive truth any more as soon as it has reached a state of absolute disharmony with it. Religious truth, in its highest expression, is divine love in Jesus Christ. The man who lives only for self-seeking ends, for earthly glory, can not comprehend the beauty of love, any more than the eye which has become full of darkness can admire the splendor of the sun. "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another?"

Deceive not yourselves, then, in this, obstinate unbelievers. The source of your unbelief is in your wicked hearts. Do not speak so loftily of your systems, of your learned theories, which in your opinion have gone beyond the gospel. You have got beyond it as men go beyond the yoke of duty and moral rule. Under these great names you will cover your vices and your sins, and, above all, that inextinguishable love of

human glory which consumes you. You deny the God of the gospel because you are not willing to renounce your idol. Could we ascend to the very source of your proud doctrines, it would often appear to be something very weak and very contemptible. It is ever an Agrippa who is not willing to leave Berenice; it is the man of pleasure, or the ambitious man, who will not give up his passion, and who seeks for it most laboriously a learned justification. We shall believe your sincerity in your opposition to Christianity only when you shall show us a pure, austere, and earnest life in support of your doctrines, and, I say further, a life that is clothed with humility and divested of all desire after glory. Until then we shall not separate you from the multitude of those who have said of God and his Christ, "Let us break his bands, they are too heavy." The noisy cry of rebellion is not lifted up by your systems, but it circulates within them like a subtle and yet distinct murmur. You desire not Christian morality, because that would annoy you; and this leads you to reject the doctrine with much outcry. Moreover, even while you are assuming the attitude of judges who pronounce a final sentence concerning the gospel, it is found that you do not judge it, but by it you are unmasked. It has shown your corruption and your attachment to evil. If you had lived before the Christian era, you might have draped yourselves in the cloak of philosophy, and passed for disinterested sages. But now that cloak is pierced through and through. Your passions have constrained you to take sides against the perfect revelation of goodness and truth. You have cursed the light because your works were

evil. Take good heed lest by continuing in that path you make wholly blind the inward eye, and reach a time when it shall be decidedly too late to catch the least glimpse of the light of the sun. The evil committed, loved, served during a long period of time, ends by conforming itself to our moral nature now completely perverted, and its assaults reach even to the conscience, which, wearied with the contest, approves the evil. Then it is no longer simply the opposition of darkness to light, the usurpation of evil is consummated; it is no longer acknowledged as evil, it calls itself good, and darkness calls itself light; if Jesus Christ appears, he is not adored, but is looked upon as the son of Beelzebub. Fearful overthrow of all just notions, total revolution of the conscience! When he has reached this point, man ceases to be man; he becomes a moral monster; he is a cold-blooded demoniac; and this cold delirium is a thousand times worse than the most frightful madness. We are not making a picture from imagination. This was seen in the very times of our Saviour; and if you desire that it be not seen again in you, be sincere with yourselves, confess the secret cause of your unbelief. I do not tell you to believe this day. It is impossible to lead a man whose eyes are diseased into the full light of the sun. I only say to you, Heal your diseased eyes, undertake the healing of your conscience. Endeavor to fulfill that which you know of the will of God. Throw sincerity into this effort, and quickly by a mysterious influence the inward eye will be illumined anew. It would be in truth too lamentable to live overwhelmed with the splendor of that light from on high which has shone upon us for

eighteen centuries, and at the same time remain like those wretched nations of pagan antiquity whom the prophet shows to us sitting, or rather buried, in darkness.

Christ's apologetic consisted, then, principally in carrying back the appeal from unbelief to immorality, from an erring understanding to a perverted conscience. Such is the method which he has bequeathed to us; and I can not too earnestly press it upon Christians to employ this method in their intercourse with unbelievers. It is applicable to all, and can be used by all. Let them imitate their Saviour on this point, as on every other. I do not say, neglect other proofs, but let us strike the adversary in his most sensitive point. Let us not leave him the position of an arrogant judge; it is dangerous for him. Let us cause him to descend from his tribunal by bringing his sins before him. On this ground we shall certainly be victorious. Discussion unduly excites the intellect of our opponent. The understanding, and yet more human language, is fertile in resources. To our arguments he will oppose arguments, and our antagonist will withdraw probably satisfied with his dialectic skill and with his talents. Let us come to the fact; let us make haste: sin, perdition, is the fact; let us approach it with tact and discretion, certainly, but with frankness, placing ourselves on trial. Let us not leave our adversary, or rather that poor sinner, who can not do without a Saviour, until we plant in his conscience an arrow which shall remain infixed. Perhaps it will bring him wounded and penitent to the divine Comforter. Scarcely had Jesus spoken a

few words to the Samaritan woman, when he interrupted the conversation by addressing to her that humiliating word, "Go call thy husband." "I have no husband." "Thou hast well said, I have no husband." He put his finger upon the wound of that soul; therefore will she quickly ask of him to be healed. The breach by which the Lord enters within us is always made in our pride. The sense of sin prepares the way for him. The preacher of repentance has not ceased to be the forerunner of Christ. Let us then preach repentance, not only in a general manner, but to each one individually. Let us make him feel the edge of that ax which is still laid at the root of the trees, and let us remember that preparation for witness-bearing to the truth should be made by rendering energetic testimony against evil. He who assails sin directly strikes both error and evil at the indivisible point where it is impossible to separate them. This, too, is the strongest and most fruitful kind of apologetic, because it really goes to the bottom of things, and, following the Master's example, it makes its appeal to the deepest and most earnest want of the soul, the need of salvation.

Perhaps many of our hearers think that we have attributed too much importance to Christian apologetic, and that greater confidence should be reposed in the grace of God. This scruple would indicate a singular misconception with regard to divine grace, which chooses human activity as the ordinary channel of its gifts. We firmly believe that, in season and out of season, and by all possible means, we must plead the Master's cause. But not the less fully on this account

do we accept that saying, "No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him." Without grace, without the operation of the divine Spirit, heart and conscience remain insensible; and it is especially when grappling with unbelief that we feel the barrenness of human efforts left to themselves. God has not abdicated his power of acting directly upon the hearts of men. It is he who prepares the field, who bestows the fructifying rain and dew; it is he who often incloses in the simplest word secret and irresistible virtue. If he withdraws his breath, our word is like the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal. And therefore, O Lord, being called to give testimony before this unbelieving and perverse generation, we desire to supplicate thee to grant to thy witnesses the constantly renewed effusion of thy Spirit. Give them the spirit of prayer, that they may not speak to any of their brethren before they have spoken to thee, O Father, to ask of thee an effectual word, full of thyself. Shake the conscience; and may the great and severe lessons which thou seemest ready to give to this age prepare in the vexed soil a furrow wherein eternal seed shall be sown. May thy mighty voice impose silence on insolent doubt and mocking unbelief, and, understanding the nothingness of glory and pride, may hearts long hardened break beneath thy powerful hand, so that from their humiliation faith shall be born in them at the word spoken by the defenders of truth, through thy grace, and to thy glory!

CHAPTER X.

JESUS CHRIST AS SACRIFICE.

FIRST PERIOD OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST, OR HIS MANIFESTATION TO THE WORLD.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" — John i. 29.

WE have finished our description of the Redeemer's prophetical work. We enter upon his priestly work to-day. It did not suffice that he should be a prophet; it was also necessary that he should be the propitiatory victim, or otherwise salvation would not have been accomplished, and the human conscience would still have sighed after the perfect Saviour; for everywhere and always it has perceived that a sacrifice was the indispensable condition of reconciliation with God. The extent of this sacrifice is revealed to us in our text. It shows us that it ought not to be restricted to Christ's death, but that it embraces his entire life. In fact, the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," are applied to our Saviour at the time when he is entering upon his ministry. More than two years passed away from the day on which they were spoken to the day when his redeeming blood watered

the earth; from which we conclude that the sacrifice on the cross is the final term, the culminating point of a long sacrifice, and that the immolation of Jesus Christ began with his entrance into the world. Not for a moment did he cease to be the Lamb that taketh away sin, the expiatory victim, the great high priest of the new covenant. The sacrifice of the cross doubtless combines and absorbs all others, as a large river absorbs all the streams which pour themselves into its bosom. This is the sacrifice pre-eminently, that one without which all others would be insufficient. And therefore the gospel reverts to it continually. Most frequently it refers all the redemptive sufferings to the last, which is the crown and completion of them all. But it would be an inadequate comprehension of the gospel, and would be doing violence to our text, absolutely to isolate the crucifixion. Jesus Christ did not take a single step outside of the pathway that led to the cross. He constantly was ascending Calvary. The sufferings of his life are to be added to the sufferings of his death, in respect to the great and final expiation.

My brethren, in what should this expiation consist? How could the Lamb of God take away the sin of the world? It is only the answer to this question which will enable us to understand the sacerdotal work of Christ.

The normal state of man is one of absolute agreement with God, of perfect union with him; but, being a free and intelligent creature, he can realize that agreement only by the harmony of his will with the divine will. The result of the Fall was the opposition

of the human will to the divine will; in other words, violation of God's law, rebellion. The God of love is at the same time the God of justice and holiness. He can not suffer his law to be violated with impunity, unless he declares that it possesses no importance, and that it is allowable to make a mock at it and to trample it under foot; that is to say, unless the very foundations of the moral world be overthrown. It must needs be that the guilty man feel that the disharmony between the creature and the Creator is a frightful confounding of the order of the universe, that rebellion is the greatest of misfortunes, or rather the sole source of all misfortune, whilst it is also a crime. God's law is but vain words if it is not avenged on its violators, and if it does not prove by their punishment the folly and shame of revolt. A pardon incompatible with justice would be equivalent to God's abdication of his throne, for his greatness can not be separated from his holiness. I will go farther: I will say that the conscience of man would not desire such a pardon, that it would not even believe in its existence, for it bears inscribed in letters of fire the righteousness of God.

Punishment is, then, my brethren, the precise sanction of God's outraged and violated law. It must fall upon the guilty head; the hand of the Most High could not hold back that thunderbolt irresistibly attracted toward sin. And although God should not punish, man would punish himself; for as sin consists in rejecting God, as it is the refusal to love him, it is the refusal of happiness; it is the essence of all unhappiness: evil and misery are, in the absolute point of

view, one and the same thing. Pardon, then, could not consist in the simple, bare repeal of condemnation; it can not restore guilty humanity into the communion of God so long as it is in a state of revolt. To effect that, it must needs be that God is no longer God, that love is no longer love, that is to say, the profound harmony of two beings. Humanity can be saved only by returning to God; and it will return to God only when it shall have perfectly fulfilled the divine law. Heavenly pity is manifested, not by terminating the condemnation in a moment, but by giving to man the means of finding God again, and of rendering back his heart to him. If Jesus Christ had come into the world to bring a salvation not founded upon perfect obedience, he would have come in fact to deny the justice of God, and to deliver it up to our contempt. In that case it would have more availed not to leave heaven, and to spare himself a humiliation so useless, and so fatal in its results.

My brethren, no child of Adam could satisfy divine justice. Were they not all shut up in sin and in condemnation, as in a circle which could not be crossed? The circle must be broken somewhere by a creative and almighty act. The Son of man, conceived of the Holy Spirit, the God-man, is alone capable of completely fulfilling the divine law; nay, more, obedience must go to the extent of sacrifice, for the revolt of humanity has drawn after it terrible chastisements. Human life has become a life of sorrows, and the earth a vale of tears. The point at issue is not now, as on the first day, to obey in a bright and glorious abode, but to obey in the world of condemnation. It is necessary,

then, to enter into that condemnation, accept it, and take it on one's self. This acceptance constituted primarily the priestly work of Jesus Christ. That which Scripture calls the wrath of God rests upon our poor world. By descending into it, our Saviour puts himself beneath this wrath, that is to say, he undergoes all the punishments here below which flow from sin as from a corrupted and inexhaustible fountain. From the humiliating weakness of infancy up to the yet more humiliating weakness of death, from physical anguish up to moral anguish, pushed to its utmost limits, until it wrung from him that mysterious word, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" he combined in himself all the consequences of the Fall. He accepted them freely and willingly, since he had not merited them. He who was without sin was treated as the sinner; he suffered, he died; but his sufferings and his death rose to the hight of a free sacrifice of love and obedience. Condemnation, thus accepted, is no longer simply condemnation; it is an act of union with God, a restorative act, a redemption. We can say with the prophet, that the chastisement which was ready to fall upon us fell upon him. His sacrifice sealed for ever that union between humanity and divinity, of which his person was the certain pledge. His obedience unto the death of the cross established the agreement between the human will and the divine will which the Fall had destroyed, for he offered himself as being the Son of man. He is the real representative of humanity. He concentrated it in himself, according to the expression of Irenæus. His priestly work is therefore his essential work; and as it consisted in the volun-

tary acceptance of all the consequences of the Fall, of all the sufferings of human life, we are justified in saying that it embraced his earthly career, from the beginning to the close; and we have now but to sketch it in its general features. We shall do no more than point you to the Lamb of God proceeding to the altar to take away the sins of the world.

It is not our aim, my brethren, to unroll before you the entire life of our Saviour. We suppose it known by our hearers. Moreover, the preaching of the gospel constantly returns to this inexhaustible theme. We desire only to give you a guiding thread to direct you amid the multiplicity of facts, and to exhibit to you, in its unity, that holy life which was but one prolonged immolation. We shall endeavor to bring out this aspect of the sacrifice, which is its most important aspect. Let us never forget that at the base of all particular sacrifices there lies one antecedent sacrifice, from which they flow, — the humiliation of our Saviour, his incarnation, his appearance upon our sinful earth. This already suffices to enable us to acknowledge in him the Lamb, the victim which taketh away the sin of the world. But we shall not limit ourselves to that view; we shall endeavor to bring forth to view the special sacrifice which marked each period of the Redeemer's life, until that mysterious hour which presents to us all the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows, bound together in a single indivisible bundle to crush him and to save us.

It would be necessary, first of all, in order to give you a complete idea of Christ's ministry, to transport you into the midst of the scenes of that land of Judæa

in which he dwelt, that you may tread his native soil; for if Jesus Christ was pre-eminently the man of all countries and of all times, he nevertheless possessed a very marked individuality. He was placed in given circumstances, over against certain special facts. The more exact the presentation of those circumstances and facts to the mind, the better is the Saviour known. Then nothing abstract attaches any longer to our conception of him. We see him, we hear him. He lives before our eyes. He is no longer truth reduced into an idea, but truth that lives, and which consequently appears under an individual form. It will be necessary, therefore, to call your attention to the sphere of his activity before speaking to you of his work. The state of Judaism at that memorable epoch must be depicted. You must see it resembling, in all respects, expiring paganism, with its Stoics and Epicureans, only the Stoics are called Pharisees at Jerusalem, and the Epicureans Sadducees. These two tendencies of thought, which flourish only upon the ruins of falling religions, and which strive to escape from despair through pride or through voluptuousness, reappear under different names upon the sacred soil of revelation. The Pharisee wraps himself in his legal righteousness, as the Stoic in his chilling virtue. Both at heart worship only themselves. The Sadducee, like the Epicurean, does not believe in the immortality of the soul; and if he says, "All upon earth and in heaven is vanity," he does not fail to add, "except enjoyment." A third sect, the Essenes, a kind of Jewish monks, who live in abstinence and solitude, are the representatives in Judæa of the ancient asceticism

of the East, whilst at Alexandria a fantastic form of mysticism seeks to revive the ancient faith by pious practices, and to appease the troubled conscience by useless macerations. Religion is no longer anything but a vain form; and if it still possesses a certain influence over the people, it is because they confound religion with patriotism, which has become tinged with a gloomy enthusiasm in their minds in consequence of the misfortunes of their country and its subjection to the Roman yoke. It would be necessary to paint in lively colors their colossal formalism, those unbelieving priests, those scribes and teachers stifling beneath the letter the vivifying spirit of the old covenant, that gross and fanatical multitude groaning under foreign domination and waiting for a temporal deliverer. It would be necessary to bring together all the signs of that vague expectation with regard to a great approaching event which agitated the entire world, troubled Herod upon his throne, disquieted the Sanhedrim, and urged the people to follow every impostor who played upon their passions. In a word, it would be requisite to cause you to live the life of that age and of that country. Then the gospel history would acquire an entirely new interest for you. But, unfortunately, we are bound to limit ourselves to these general indications. That which we particularly regret is not being able to pause upon the mission of the courageous prophet, who, being the immediate forerunner of Jesus Christ, gave powerful expression to those secret anticipations, to those pious hopes of salvation, to that inward prophecy, which, in the silence of prophecy properly so called, had developed itself in earnest souls, and which

announced with ever-augmenting clearness that the long and ardent desire of Israel was about to be fulfilled. What a beautiful and noble figure is John the Baptist! Should we not say that the entire ancient dispensation, personified in him, approaches to salute, or rather to adore, Him who was to come, and who at length had come? Have you not found the two most characteristic features of the preparatory economy repeated in him? Who could fail to recognize the man of the law in that man who preached repentance with such indomitable energy, and in accents at times so terrific? We are ready to say that he is descending from the top of Sinai, and that upon his austere features there shines a burning reflection of the wrath of God. When he plunges his numerous proselytes into the waters of the Jordan does he not seem to be fulfilling the great mission of the Old Testament, which was to plunge the burdened sinner into the bitter sense of his sin, to bury him therein in some sort, in order that he might turn unto the God of pardon? In another aspect, have you not recognized the man of prophecy in those closing words of all his appeals, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"? Have you not discerned the man of prophecy in him who was continually declaring, "One cometh after me"? And do not law and prophecy constitute the entire Old Testament? In its name, therefore, John the Baptist comes solemnly to announce its fulfillment, and the necessary disappearance of the white light of the dawn before the Sun of truth. We should love to gather together those different lineaments of character which have rendered this great servant of the Most

High the pattern of witnesses to the truth. Consumed with zeal for his mission, living for it alone, his entire person stamped with that seal of austere greatness, of profound and fearful earnestness, which pertains to a representative of God; a man of the desert, even when encompassed by the multitude, scourging with his rough and manly speech the strong and the powerful who live in sin; by his severe rebukes troubling Herod even in the midst of the impure feasts of his palace, and thrusting an arrow into his conscience which he shall never be able to draw forth; above all this, humble among the humble, ambitious only of obliterating the traces of his own footsteps so that the Messiah alone should be honored, as desirous to decrease as others are to increase, and finally crowning a life of heroic fidelity with a martyr's death, — such was John the Baptist, and such would we love to show him to you in the last acts of his ministry; but we are forced to be content with stating in a very general manner the means employed by the Forerunner to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus Christ. It is time to enter upon this work of sorrow and love. Let us survey the different phases in the Saviour's life, and with regard to each one of them let us endeavor to establish the words of our text, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

See him, then, first in the manger at Bethlehem. He submitted himself to the humiliating beginnings of human life; he passed through the perfect helplessness of the little child. He was seen in swaddling clothes and in his cradle, like the frailest of our newborn babes. This was the commencement of his vol-

untary humiliation, for it was not merely in his case a fact of nature; when he left heaven he knew to what degrees of weakness it would be needful for him to stoop. Infancy was then the first of his chosen acts of self-humiliation, and the first one among his sacrifices.

Let us pass rapidly over the part concerning which the gospel history furnishes no details, and let us respect in this silence the will of God. Because history is silent here, legends have sprung up in great numbers to paint this epoch in the life of Christ; and if we desire to know to what extent the legend belittles that which it professes to embellish, to what extent it changes while professing to conserve, we need only peruse the apocryphal gospels. Let it suffice us to know that Jesus Christ passed through, one by one, all the stages of human life; that he subjected himself to the conditions of gradual development; that he was like unto us in all things except sin; that he underwent the trial of many sufferings, privations, and agonies inherent in our earthly condition, during the thirty years of solitary toil and of obscurity which were spent at Nazareth.

Let us come to the momentous hour when he enters upon his active ministry. After having received a kind of inauguration and consecration by baptism at the hands of the man of the old dispensation, he is driven into the desert, as if to prepare for the holy activity which he is about to manifest. There he will find one of the greatest sufferings of human life: we mean temptation. Since the Fall, a mysterious might has been granted to the powers of

darkness. Man is obliged to struggle against an invisible but furious adversary who everywhere pursues him. We shall not set ourselves to prove the existence of rebel angels and their leader. We will ask those who deny it on behalf of a preconceived system, if they are very sure that they have never felt this baleful influence; if there have not been days when they were pierced by a fiery dart hurled by no human hand, days when they heard a seductive voice less perceptible than the slightest whispering of the wind, and yet stirring the secret fibers of their hearts or raising the tempest of their lusts? Ah! for ourselves we know too well this perfidious and obstinate tempter, who is called the Prince of this world. The present life is the life of combat and temptation, and Jesus Christ would not have been truly the Redeemer if he had not been tempted like as we are. Behold, then, this Lamb of God struggling with the devouring lion! He accepted this humiliation and this sorrow. He whose eyes are too pure to look upon iniquity suffered himself to be approached by the leader of every rebellion, who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. Ah! who then could dare to say that such temptation does not form a part of his passion and his redemptive sufferings? To say that, one must have but a very feeble comprehension of the holy horror which goodness entertains for evil, and light for darkness. The sacrifice begun in the manger is then continued in the desert. And let us add, that no preparation could be preferable to that which he found in being tempted upon the threshold of the career in which so many temptations awaited him.

Nothing prepares for victory like victory; the best means of overcoming is to have already overcome. The Saviour enters upon the contest, having already won the victory over his adversary in that singular combat of which the desert was the arena. Not only was the temptation of Jesus Christ a sacrifice in itself, but it was also the occasion of Christ's consecrating himself anew and wholly to the fulfillment of his mission of love. Satan tempted him as the Messiah, and thrice sought to prevail upon him to use his miraculous power for a selfish and personal end: "Command these stones to be made bread." "Cast thyself down from the temple, that the angels may bear thee up." "Aim to possess the kingdoms of this world." In other words, "Seek thine own advantage from thy miracles." "Live for thyself and not for others." The temptation of Jesus Christ was, you perceive, under a specific form, the everlasting and universal temptation of the self-seeking principle. You know how Jesus Christ repulsed it thrice, thus showing that, having come to accomplish a work of love, he desired to fulfill it by love, and that he placed his miraculous power, as his whole life, at the service of his brethren, without diverting any portion of it to himself. Thus the temptation of Jesus Christ was a renewed gift of his being to God and to men, at the same time that it was a part of his sacrifice.

Having thus prepared himself in the combats of the desert, Jesus Christ enters upon his active ministry. It is a new step in the pathway to the cross. New sacrifices are prepared for him. And, first, his life during the course of his ministry was a human

life; that is to say, it was that tissue of pains and sufferings which it is impossible to analyze, but which are thickly sown for all men. He freely accepted them. He fed upon our daily bread, which is often a bread of bitterness, and he constantly broke it with thanksgiving to his Father. To these pains inherent in life here below, he joined that of poverty. He took on him the most wretched form of human existence because he wished to lay upon himself the burden of our greatest sorrows. Poverty is one of the saddest consequences of the Fall; sad for the poor man whom it afflicts, sadder still perhaps for the rich man whom it accuses. Of necessity it must find a place in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Another suffering which never left him, because it flowed from his love, is the suffering caused by his compassion. The pity of Jesus Christ had no relation to ours, which is so superficial, so temporary, and so easy to bear. His was a true communion with all those who suffered and wept; no one suffered near him without rending his heart. Far more than this: he suffered for those who did not suffer; he wept over the hardened sinner, and nothing wounded him like the sight of unrepentant evil. The Lamb who was taking away the sin of the world was bearing the weight of it upon his heart. It is easy to conceive how contact with men must have pierced his soul, and whoever apprehends but dimly the Redeemer's love understands that his compassion truly constituted a part of his passion.

But aside from these sufferings common to all the phases of his ministry, each special phase had its quota

of sorrows. Three distinct periods can be marked in the active career of our Redeemer. It was very brief, for it did not extend even over three years. In truth, if we reckon up the passovers at which our Lord was present, which is the only sure method of settling the duration of his ministry, we find three related by St. John. The first passover is that on which Jesus Christ drove the sellers out of the temple. John ii. 13. The second is mentioned in the sixth chapter of St. John. Jesus was not at that feast. The third is the great and solemn festival when the true paschal Lamb was substituted for the typical lamb. The entire ministry of Jesus Christ is comprehended within these two and a half years.* Within this brief space of time we discover three distinct phases. In the first period, Jesus Christ is revealed to the world; he is manifested as the Messiah, as the Son of God. This period begins with the enthusiasm of the people for him, and ends with their abandonment of him. It opens with the miracle at Cana, and closes with the discourse in the synagogue of Capernaum concerning spiritual food, after which the multitude forsook Jesus Christ. The second period is that of the avowed contest between Jesus Christ and the Jews, a constant and mournful struggle. It begins with the feast of tabernacles at Jerusalem, when they seek to put him in prison, and closes with the resurrection of Lazarus, by which the Saviour's enemies are exasperated and are decided no longer to keep any terms with him. The last period is

* Many, however, regard the feast of the Jews, mentioned John v. 1, a passover, making *four* in our Lord's ministry, which thus extended over three and a half years. — Ed.

that of the issue of the contest; it is the last journey of Jesus Christ to Jerusalem; it is his unspeakable agony; it is Gethsemane; it is Golgotha. These three phases are like three steps up the altar of sacrifice. The Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world surmounted them one after the other. He renewed his self-immolation upon each one of them, until he was led to the slaughter without opening his mouth. These are three acts of his passion. To-day we will concern ourselves only with the first.

But before recalling to your minds, my brethren, the chief features of that holy life, there is one fact which we ought to place by itself, in some sort, since it possesses an equal importance with reference to the three phases in the ministry of Jesus Christ. We refer to the selection and the training of the apostles. The evangelists relate that twelve men, belonging to the lower classes of society, were chosen by our Lord to be his habitual companions, the witnesses of his acts, the hearers of his words, in a sense his intimate disciples. Few facts have been more perverted than these, and from few have error and superstition drawn consequences more to be lamented. We can not enter into a regular controversy upon this important point. We shall confine ourselves to stating what the apostleship is in our view, according to its very institution. The word *apostle* signifies *an envoy*, *one sent*. The apostles are then envoys of the Lord. In this sense their mission had no special character, for all Christians are messengers of Jesus Christ. They were twelve in number; this figure being symbolical, and being used with reference to the twelve tribes of Israel. Those

twelve tribes constituted God's ancient people. The apostles by their typical number represented the new Israel, the new people of God. In this sense, also, they were not clothed with a character which was exclusively theirs, for we all are destined to enter among the "willing" people, just as we all are called to convey the divine message. Nor has the promise of the Holy Spirit created a privilege exclusively appertaining to the apostles, for the Holy Spirit belongs to the assembly of Christians. The gift of miracles was not a special gift of apostles, for it was largely diffused among the early Christians. What is it, then, which constitutes the peculiar character of an apostle? for he has a peculiar and exceptional character. Christ's selection of them proves it abundantly, as also the care taken by the apostles to complete their number after the treachery of Judas. The peculiar function of the twelve apostles is to be the first witnesses of Jesus Christ, his accredited witnesses. The quality requisite in the case of Matthias, in order that he might be invested with this charge, is to have been with the Lord from the baptism of John until the resurrection. Acts i. 21, 22. The apostle's mission is to preserve the teaching of Jesus Christ and the living remembrance of his person, and to lay the corner-stone in such a manner that upon it the church of all ages may repose. He is the Christian, the messenger, pre-eminently, because he bears the mandate to render to Jesus Christ a testimony which is absolutely competent and sufficient. The apostle was not only the witness of Jesus Christ, but he was the witness prepared in a wholly special manner by Jesus Christ himself through daily contact

with him. The apostleship of St. Paul is an exception; and he was recognized because his miraculous conversion was as valid a consecration as that special preparation which the other apostles had received from the Master. Such preparation is the rule; entrance into the apostleship by another way is wholly in the light of an exception. The apostles do not, then, form a college of priests, but a group of witnesses chosen among the first disciples and prepared by Jesus Christ to serve instead of his visible presence, by means of their preaching, or their writings, or the writings of their immediate disciples. He has so arranged everything that they should render a conclusive testimony. First he selected them himself, and afterwards he gave them the Holy Spirit, not only to fulfill their general vocation as Christians, but also for the accomplishment of their special charge as being the first witnesses of redemption. It is evident that in this point of view an apostolical succession can not be spoken of. If the apostles are immediate witnesses, they can not have successors, for after immediate witnesses there can be only mediate witnesses; no appointment can transmit the quality of being an eye-witness; and as the authority of the apostles depended upon the peculiar relation that had existed between them and Jesus Christ, that authority was incommunicable. They personified not a body of bishops, but the church itself, Christian people, the everlasting Israel, the twelve tribes of the new covenant. It is this church, contemplated as a whole, which succeeds to them; it is the great messenger of God, the permanent witnessing body for Jesus Christ, the apostle with no successor; and the church

is this in so far forth as she rests upon the primitive testimony. It is with the apostolate as with a mighty river, which flows at first confined within a narrow bed and rolling on a perfectly pure and limpid current; soon it enlarges its bed, and sends out numberless waves, and spreads over a vast basin; but now the water has become more or less changed. He who would drink it pure must drink it near its source. The vocation of the existing church is, in truth, the apostolate; it is in truth the great mission of Christian witness-bearing; but it is the apostolate changed at the same time that it is enlarged. The primitive apostleship alone possesses authority; from it all religious truth gushes forth, to it we must constantly repair; but it is none the less certain that it is continued in the church as a whole, and that aside from this there is no apostolical succession. This is so true that already in primitive times the name of apostle was not given to the twelve exclusively; it was given to Christians, such as James, who had received no special consecration. At that time the approaching and necessary enlargement of the apostolate was already anticipated.

However it may be with those controverted questions, it is certain that Jesus Christ chose a few men of the people to become his special witnesses. He chose them among the lower classes of society because there he met with souls possessed of the greatest simplicity, and most capable of receiving the divine impress. Moreover, every great religious reform has a popular character; it proceeds from artless, impetuous, just, and ardent minds, who embrace

truth with uncalculating enthusiasm and with unreserved devotion. The first disciples were not ordinary men; they represent the chief diversities of human character to be met with in this world. Among them are ardent natures and calm natures, practical men, and also profound and mystical souls. Fashioned by a delicate and powerful hand, and penetrated with the spirit of the Master, they present to us the beautiful spectacle of human nature regenerated in its most decided types; each of them reflects one aspect of the Master, and thus they will preserve to us the complete image of his divine humanity. Nothing in the life of Jesus Christ is more wonderful than the manner in which he carries on the education of these men, uncultured, rude, and for a long time bound to him by the heart's instinct rather than by thoughtful conviction. With how divine an art did the Sculptor of the soul cut the hard and formless marble until the shining forth of his thought could be seen in it! What forbearance! What concern for those fishermen, for those boatmen and publicans! He deposited in their hearts the seeds of truth, he watered them and cultivated them by his Spirit; he instructed them with regard to the meaning of all his works. He did more: he sent them forth on missions, putting them into the salutary school of experience, and by new teachings he imprinted on their minds the lessons which they had received. It was for them that he uttered his greatest sayings, those which were destined most powerfully to regenerate the world. Behold in that handful of unlettered men the brilliant auditory which the eternal Word

had chosen for himself. Let us learn from him the fruitfulness of Christian labor in its very humility. If we can speak only to a few souls, let us speak to them without discouragement, provided that it be with faith and love. Let us cultivate them in obscurity with tender care. Let us remember that the last discourses of Jesus Christ were pronounced in an upper chamber at Jerusalem, before eleven disciples who hardly understood him, and that these same words, transmitted from age to age and flying from one end of the world to the other, have been the consolation of thousands of Christians. Let us remember that those eleven disciples became the conquerors of the old pagan world, and were the first stones of the church built upon the divine Foundation-rock. How doubt, after that, the blessed influence of Christian activity even in the narrowest circle?

Let us return, my brethren, to the ministry of our Saviour, and to his priestly work. We have not lost sight of it for a single moment, for suffering had a large part in his daily intercourse with his chosen disciples. One of the most poignant sorrows of the present life is the imperfection of human affections, the bruisings of the heart, and the painful shocks of which they are the constant occasion. Affection without a cloud would be affection without sin. Poor sinners, even when they love one another, often make each other suffer. Doubtless the Saviour's love for his disciples was perfect, like all his being, and if he suffered it was never his fault. But contact with souls so little developed in faith brought on him unavoidable sufferings; their lack of sympathy, their

feelings of pride and irritation, and later their shameful want of fidelity, more than once wounded his heart, and forced from him words like these: "How long shall I be with you, O slow of heart to believe and understand!"

But if he was not always understood by his disciples, he was at least loved by them, whilst he was hated by the world. This hatred, however, did not burst forth at the very first. In the early period of his ministry, he manifested his glory to the Jewish people; he excited among them a lively admiration, and even enthusiasm. But this enthusiasm was quickly extinguished. The more Jesus Christ made himself known to men, the more did he see himself abandoned by them; and therein precisely lay the great suffering of this portion of his life. It is hard to be solitary in the bosom of one's generation, to speak in the desert after having created among men the most resonant echoes. Such is always, however, the condition of goodness and truth in this world up to the day when the cross which men are preparing for them is finally planted upon the earth, in order that they may be exposed to shame. Jesus Christ accepted this condition, and submitted himself thereto in all circumstances. Let us follow, my brethren, with an attentive eye, the progressive manifestation of his doctrine; at every revelation we shall see the ranks of his disciples diminish. The more admirable he shows himself, the less is he admired; the more brightly his holiness shines forth, the more does admiration for him decrease.

Jesus Christ at first reveals himself as a powerful

Messiah. He multiplies his miracles. Nothing was more suited to the object of the miracle than to render the Jews attentive to the Saviour's mission, and to lead them to acknowledge in him a messenger of God. St. John, in speaking of the first one of the works of Christ, says "that thus he manifested forth his glory." John ii. 11. In truth, the miraculous cures, the raising of the dead, the sovereign power which he wielded over nature, threw a great splendor over his person. So long as he performed many miracles he was the object of popular favor. "Jesus," relates St. Matthew, "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan." If Jesus Christ had confined himself to the manifestation of his glory, the whole people would certainly have remained faithful to him. A powerful and glorious Saviour who multiplies bread to appease the hunger of multitudes, and who heals the sick, is sure to be accepted by all the world. There is nothing in him that jostles the prejudices and passions of the crowd. Let him only go on; a few more miracles, and he will be crowned king!

But, as we have said, the miracle is only the exterior side of the work of Jesus Christ. It must needs be that he reveal the most elevated aim of his mission, which is a spiritual aim. And it is now that he is about to encounter opposition. St. John informs us that, after having manifested his glory at Cana, the Lord went to Jerusalem, to be present at the feast of the passover. It is his first journey to Jerusalem since entering upon his active ministry. He goes to the temple; he finds there the sellers and the money-changers, who profaned it, and drives them forth ignominiously in holy indignation. Jesus Christ appears no more simply as a prophet who performs miracles. Men feel that he is sent against all that is evil, against all that is in opposition to God. Men feel that he is a religious reformer, and they remember that saying of a prophet, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Those who traffic in holy things tremble before him, and, doubtless, in more than one instance implacable hate was enkindled against him on that solemn day.

Jesus Christ is a religious reformer, but it is necessary to know in what sense. At first he assailed the grossest and most palpable abuses. He does not wish men to be mistaken with regard to this, and to conceive that he came solely to make clean the outside of the cup and platter. In his interview with Nicodemus, which took place at the same epoch, he insists not only on the necessity of outward renewal, but also upon the necessity of the new birth: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 5. He announces

already that there is salvation only in him, and that he is the only Son of the Father, who was given to the world in order that whosoever should believe on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John iii. 16. This high doctrine was not yet understood, but in proportion as it was, in that proportion did the Son of God encounter a more lively opposition.

He returns from Jerusalem into Galilee by Samaria, and he takes the occasion of this journey to disclose a new aspect of his mission, which will alienate from him a large number of the Jews. The bare fact of his freely conversing with a Samaritan woman is a declaration that he does not regard himself as sent to the Jews alone. His words, as related to his disciples, and by his disciples to the Jews, are yet more explicit. Did he not aver that the day would come when men should no longer worship at Jerusalem alone, but in every place, and at all times, they should offer worship in spirit and in truth to God, who is a Spirit? To speak thus was to cast a new leaven of hatred into the heart of those haughty Jews, who profoundly despised foreign nations, and especially the Samaritans. A new revelation, and increasing hatred!

Returning from Galilee, our Lord performs several striking miracles; he heals the son of Herod's officer, and the demoniac of Gadara; he raises from the dead the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain. Beyond all doubt, these miracles called forth lively admiration; but as he did not manifest his glory merely, but manifested his doctrine at the same time, the admiration was not unmixed, and in some minds it began to give place to secret indignation. It

is thus that in the city of Nazareth they sought to put him to death because he had wounded the national pride of the inhabitants by showing to them that the grace of God is not confined within the limits of any one country, and that those who believe themselves to have a claim of natural right upon it are deprived of such right by their very pride. "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian." Luke iv. 27. That touching scene which occurred in the house of Simon the Pharisee, the pardon so compassionately granted to that poor sinful woman, completed the exasperation of the hatred which those proud Jews cherished against Jesus Christ. Here, on the one side, is a Pharisee, that is, a man of repute in the nation, a just man according to the world, who thinks that he has nothing wherewith to reproach himself. Here, on the other side, is a wretched, defiled creature, a lost woman. She sheds a few tears, she utters a prayer, and Jesus Christ declares her to be justified; that is to say, she is placed in the same rank with the righteous and virtuous Simon; nay, more, she is placed far above him, for she has loved Him more who is alone worthy to be loved. So, then, with his righteousness and his good works, the Pharisee is put below the repenting courtesan. He feels that the Master will not say to him, as to her, "Go in peace," and that he considers him as being without salvation. This practical revelation of free forgiveness is for the proud man the most odious of all things. He trembles with anger. Do not forget that in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican our Lord uttered so plain a commentary on

this fact that there could not possibly be any further misconception with regard to his real meaning. It is, then, well understood that he brings forth a doctrine which destroys all self-righteousness, and which puts a value only on repentance and love. Well, then, may it be said, "A new revelation, increasing hatred!"

Jesus Christ repairs a second time to Jerusalem, to celebrate one of the Jewish festivals, which one it is not easy to determine with precision; we only know that it was not the passover.* The Lord profited by this circumstance to reveal still more clearly the nature of the reform which he desired to effect. He heals a paralytic near the pool of Bethesda on a Sabbath day. John v. 8. This was setting himself in direct opposition to Pharisaic tradition. That had befallen them which comes to all those who have lost the religious life, and who nevertheless wish still to preserve a certain kind of religion. No longer possessing the reality, they cleave to the appearance, imagining that the appearance of piety will secure for them the advantages of piety. They hold the more to forms the more they have lost that which is essential and fundamental in religion. Therefore they multiply forms indefinitely in order to deceive themselves more completely, and they exaggerate the ceremonial part of worship, the better to conceal the frightful void in their beliefs. At Jerusalem there was an idolatrous attachment to the Sabbath, for the very reason that men had ceased to worship the living God. A profound faith is above these exaggerated scruples; a religion

* John v. The principal Jewish feast would have the article, which is not given in the original. [Commentators, however, differ on this point. Not a few of the most eminent hold that it *was* the passover. — ED.]

which is outward, and which consists in observances, thinks itself lost if one of its miserable forms escapes from it. To authenticate itself it needs a complete religious equipage. It really is afraid, if its equipage is taken away, of being condemned to earnestness, which it will not have at any price. It multiplies its fetters and its prohibitions in order that man may be so much the more free inwardly. Jesus Christ, in placing himself boldly above Pharisaic traditions concerning the Sabbath, overthrew that scaffolding which had been so laboriously reared to mask the irreligion and the unbelief reigning in their hearts. By this he showed his desire that religion should be regarded as an earnest and solemn thing, and that the faith which he brought into the world required not the falsehood of useless forms and a material devotion, but the gift of the heart and of the life. A simple fact like this of a cure performed on the Sabbath day had then a vast scope in its application; it expressly condemned all which was taught by the doctors of the nation. Thus St. John relates that already, on this occasion, the Jews sought to put him to death. We are obliged therefore to say again, "A new revelation, a hatred that increases!"

The Lord returned speedily to Galilee, and it was then that he pronounced the sermon on the mount, which may be regarded as the constitution of his kingdom. In this discourse he sums up all that he had said and done from the beginning of his ministry. His opposition to the formal Judaism of his day is manifested in a more complete and positive manner. If he acknowledges that he has come to fulfill the true Judaism, that of the law and the prophets, he repels with

indignation the false and hypocritical Judaism, the Judaism of tradition, the Judaism of noisy almsgiving and long prayers, the merciless observer of the law of retaliation, the shameless violator of the eternal law of God, finding means to thrust it aside while pretending to interpret it. With this system Jesus Christ breaks openly. He unmasks it, he denounces it. He proclaims a spiritual law, the infinite law of love; he announces a spiritual kingdom founded on the pardon of sins, into which men enter by tears, by hunger and thirst of soul; and he announces sufferings and persecutions to those who shall enter therein. The gate is strait, and the way is narrow. To pass within, one must become poor and small. Evidently Jesus Christ is not that which he had been thought to be at first. If with one hand he raises up and heals, with the other he offers a cross. "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." How can we avoid saying once more, "A new revelation, a hatred that increases!"

The hour comes in which he is to gather the fruit of such courageous faithfulness. Men follow him still, because they love his miracles, and love to profit by them without accepting his doctrine. A new passover, the second in the ministry of Jesus, was nigh at hand. But since his hour has not yet come, and he has everything to fear from the Pharisees at Jerusalem, he remains in Galilee. John vi. 4. Then occurred that significant fact which is related in the sixth chapter of St. John. The Lord had by a striking miracle satisfied the hunger of great multitudes who had followed him near the sea of Tiberias. The next day, this

same people, carried away with enthusiasm at the wonders which they had beheld, and hoping to have found in Jesus, notwithstanding his declarations, the temporal Messiah whom they desired, seek him even as far as the other side of the sea of Tiberias: they find him in the vast synagogue at Capernaum; they press about him. Jesus Christ has found again the people of the first days of his ministry; they look upon him with admiration; they celebrate his power; they would willingly kiss the hands that broke the miraculous bread. If you had entered within that synagogue you would surely have thought that his triumph was final. They call him *Master*, they prepare themselves to hear him, to worship him, perhaps. "Master," they say to him, "when camest thou hither?" He speaks. Doubtless an audience so well disposed will not be able to restrain their enthusiasm. Let us listen to Jesus Christ. Instead of promising a new miracle, he speaks of food which is spiritual and everlasting. First disappointment; as if that were the question! They come to him because they have been filled, and he tells them to labor for permanent food! And what does this labor consist in? they ask of him. If we are to turn aside from the good things of the earth, it must needs be, at least, that we can conquer heaven by our works; what shall we do? *The work of God*, answers Jesus Christ, *is that ye believe.* At this word, they remember all that they had heard concerning him, that forgiveness which he grants to publicans and to sinful women. They begin to tremble with indignation. But Jesus goes farther. That faith must be directed toward his person. "Every one which seeth the Son and believeth

on him may have everlasting life." Believe on thee, on thee, the carpenter's son! Thou askest too much of us. "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" Without pausing on account of these murmurs, our Lord enters upon the most mysterious points of his doctrine. He speaks of his death, of his bloody flesh speedily to be crucified, and in a lively image declares that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood, that is, receive Christ crucified into their hearts, in order to live the eternal life. His hearers find themselves quite too far from their starting point. They came to ask for material miracles, and they are confronted with that which is most spiritual, most offensive, and most profound in the teaching of the Saviour! He has now fully revealed himself. This is not the Messiah whom they desire. They plainly understand him. See with what eagerness they withdraw! They go away as eager to depart as they had been to enter. There remain but very few disciples. At least those are faithful friends. He can depend upon them. Alas! several separate themselves from this little group and join the multitude. Then the Master, seized with unspeakable sadness, turns himself to the twelve, saying unto them, "Will ye also go away?" The revelation of Jesus Christ was complete; the forsaking of him was almost complete. Behold the result of that first period of his ministry! He has manifested himself to the world, and the world has rejected him. What more fearful judgment could be pronounced upon our poor humanity? The Holy One and the Just appeared in full manifestation, just as he is, without vail! Reckon up those

who remain near him, and reckon up, if you can, those who forsake him! For ourselves, we need no other proof of the depth of our fall. On the day when Jesus Christ fully revealed himself, he was left alone with his twelve apostles, and one of them was a traitor. Boast thyself still of thy greatness, of thy moral dignity, O wretched human nature! There needs, in order to overwhelm thee, only the words of my Saviour to his chosen disciples, "Will ye also go away?" Such is the estimate he puts upon thee. He had seen thee so materialized and so corrupted, that he doubted even of his own. And do not forget that we have as yet reached only the period when he was forsaken. The struggle, the desperate and mortal struggle, is about to commence; and if there still remains in your mind some illusion with regard to human nature, expect to lose it while considering more closely, as we shall invite you to do in our next discourse, that struggle and its bloody close.

Is there not, my brethren, a very serious appeal to your consciences in the simple narrative of this first period of the ministry of Jesus Christ? The number of those at this day who imagine that they belong to him is large. May there not be some misconception existing here, which it is important to dissipate? For what security have we that the men of our generation are better than the cotemporaries of our Saviour? Is human nature in one age superior in itself to human nature in any other age? Whence comes, then, this eagerness to-day, and that abandonment formerly? But do you not know that the Saviour also experienced eagerness and enthusiasm at the beginning of his min-

istry? So long as he manifested his glory by miracles he was encompassed by the same crowds that forsook him as soon as his stern doctrine became known. May we not conclude from this that the greater part of those who call themselves Christians to-day have as yet considered only the external side of Christianity? Miracles, properly so called, are rare since the age of the apostles, but there is always a brilliant side to Christianity; it is its social results, its general influence, its glorious history; be well assured that the great mass of self-styled Christians in our days, in all communions, and in all churches, have been cleaving especially to this side and aspect of the subject. If it had been generally understood that the great matter involved was conversion, humiliation, and sacrifices, you would long ago have seen those thronging waves retreat, and leave the shore dry. Around the true representatives of Jesus Christ there would be the same solitude as formerly, and perhaps the abandonment would be more complete. Let the cross be only dimly discerned by the greater part of the professed Christians of the day, and you will see them fly with rapid steps, some very sorrowful like the rich young man, others enraged and furious and ready to persecute Jesus Christ in the person of his true disciples. I go farther; I will suppose this divine Saviour to enter this temple, as he entered into the synagogue at Capernaum. I will suppose him to speak to you as he spoke to the Jews; that he asks of you painful sacrifices; that he claims from you an earnest and consistent Christianity. I suppose him to bring you his cross, and to present it to you, not only that you may adore

it, but, above all, that you may bear it; is it very certain that you would all remain here? I suppose that he asks you, you, to renounce a portion, a large portion, of your goods for the poor, — observe that I do not go so far as to say that he asks for all your goods, — is it very sure that you would remain? I suppose him to ask of you, of you, to break that idol, to break that connection which removes you far from him, to renounce that habit which is dear to you; is it very certain that you would remain? I suppose him, finally, to make you understand what he means by eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and in what consists that identification with Christ crucified to which we are called; is it very certain that you would remain, all? Alas! we have a sorrowful certainty, and it is, that a great number among you would arise and go away, like the inhabitants of Capernaum, crying out, "If we had known that this doctrine was so stern we would never have come to embrace it." "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" Might it please Heaven that you should be thus brought into the light regarding yourselves, for we are well persuaded you would go away with an arrow in your souls; perhaps it would pierce you through in the end, and bring you back, laden with the weight of your sins, to the feet of the Son of David, saying unto him, "Have pity on us. Speak now; we will do all which thou shalt say unto us." May God himself be pleased to deliver you from your illusions, even though you should be forced to confess that your Christianity hitherto has been but a lie. It is the best wish we can frame on your behalf.

I resume my hypothesis. I will suppose, then, that

this temple has been very nearly emptied, like the synagogue at Capernaum. There remain but a few true Christians. The Lord turns himself to them, and he says to them again, "Will ye also go away?"

Is it very certain that there would not be some hesitation on the part of several among them, when they should have understood the meaning of the Master's language with regard to *bearing his cross?* Is it very certain—but no; I do not admit the forsaking of Christ on the part of true Christians. No, Lord; hesitation could not continue with us, who have seen not only that which thou requirest of us, but also that which thou wishest to give us in return. No, we will not go away. Where can we go without thee? How live, how die without thee? Feeble as Peter, fallible like him, we yet say with him, "Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." We say, not on account of ourselves, but because of thee and of thy compassions, and in the assurance of thine aid, "Between thee and us it is for life and death, it is for eternity. Thou wilt grant us to follow thee in thy loneliness, to follow thee in thy contest, and even in thy death. We shall thus be ever with thee, and after having suffered with thee we shall reign with thee."

CHAPTER XI.

JESUS CHRIST AS SACRIFICE.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." —John i. 29.

WE have divided the ministry of Jesus Christ into three periods: his manifestation to the world, — his contest with the proud Jews, — the conclusion of that contest, or his passion and his death. We have traversed with you the first period; we have seen the eager and enthusiastic reception given to the Saviour so long as he was content to reveal his glory by his miracles; we have seen him abandoned by the same multitudes who had followed him even into the desert, as soon as he manifests, not his power merely, but his holiness. At the close of our last discourse we showed you this divine Redeemer remaining alone with a few disciples in the synagogue at Capernaum, and saying to them, "And you, will not you also go away?" But this is not enough of abandonment. The open and avowed conflict is quickly to follow it. A neutral position can not be maintained with Jesus Christ; men either adore him, or they curse him. It is to this fearful conflict between darkness and light that we must now give our attention. Substantially, as we intimated in the first of these discourses, this conflict has not yet been interrupted upon the earth for a sin-

gle moment. It was everywhere undertaken; it was carried on in all ages and under the most diverse circumstances. It is this alone which imparts an exciting interest to the history of humanity. But just as in every war there comes a decisive day when the hostile armies encounter in the terrible shock of arms, so in the war maintained by the power of love against the power of perdition there is one supreme day, the result of which must be decisive. This fearful, yet thoroughly victorious conflict, is the combat of Jesus Christ with the world. Nothing is greater or more solemn. Every event is small and trivial in comparison with it. Let us follow, my brethren, the phases of this incomparable conflict between good and evil. Let us learn to measure the depth of our fall by seeing in Jesus Christ dying the true ideal of humanity, whilst his enemies and executioners shall recall to our minds the degradation of our race; for here are found the hight of good and the hight of evil. Let us learn what are the conditions of the truth here below. The disciples can not be treated better than their Master; men will hate and persecute in them that which they have cursed and crucified in him. Truth is devoted to crucifixion in the world of sin and unbelief. Let us learn not to suffer a cowardly surprise to seize upon us when the world's opposition to the gospel reappears, when the struggle threatens to be earnestly taken up anew. Let us recognize in this fact the accomplishment of a permanent law in religious history. Let us learn, finally, from Jesus Christ to combat as we ought to combat, to conquer as we ought to conquer, at once quiet and strong, gentle and indomitable. May

the picture of his contest with evil, in recalling to us the most vital part in the work of redemption, thus instruct us with regard to that which is momentous in the Christian's life.

Before we present rapidly the principal incidents of the combat, let us pause a moment, my brethren, to consider the strength and resources of the respective combatants. Do not forget that what took place eighteen centuries ago at Jerusalem is repeated in every epoch of church history. The same enemies of the truth appear again under different names. They are, however, less distinguishable, their features are less plainly marked, than in the gospel history. It is there we are to seek our adversaries if we wish to know them well. The gospel paints them with such true colors that they can be thoroughly known. They never had a better opportunity for unvailing their character. Truth then appeared entirely alone, so to speak, without any external support, without the prestige of great victories already won, without the sanction of ages. It was no way necessary, in a human point of view, to keep terms with it; men could blaspheme as they pleased, and insult truth at their will. There was no need to wrap up a mortal stroke in mocking homage. It was not the age of delicate irony and indirect attack. The hatred felt for Christianity at its birth was combined with simplicity of purpose: men yielded to the feeling with all safety. And, lastly, never were there historians like the sacred historians, with respect to their power to make the personages that figure in their narratives live before our eyes. To narrate thus is more than mere narra-

tive; it is to revive, it is to restore life to those who have lived. By the power, not of art but of simplicity, they present us the facts as truly living things. Herod, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Judas are represented so naturally that we know them as if we had spoken to them. These diverse types of character are so admirably distinguished, these dark figures are so expressively sketched by the evangelists, that their lineaments are graven upon our minds in a manner never to be forgotten. The gospel is not less wonderful in its revelation of evil than in its revelation of divine love. And this is because it is almost as important for us thoroughly to know the former as to know the latter. Let us profit by the bright light which the sacred narrative throws upon the enemies of the Saviour to examine ourselves, and learn whether we are not hidden in their ranks. The details already given concerning several of them will relieve us from making long explanations.

The first of these enemies is he whom Scripture calls the enemy or Satan, the enemy of all that is good, true, and life-giving. It might be said that the two great champions in this terrible war, which has been prosecuted for so many ages, personally encounter each other at length, and struggle face to face. There is now no one between the devil and his divine adversary. It is no longer a few men placed under the influence of God's Spirit who engage in conflict with a few men obedient to the suggestions of Satan. On the one side, we have the God-man, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead. On the other, we have an accursed humanity, in which

dwelleth all the fullness of demons. God, in humanity, confronts Satan likewise in human form. It is a personal combat between the chiefs of the two armies. Let us determine in what manner this visible power of hell was put forth. And, first, we have a proof of this which is at once palpable and incomprehensible: I allude to demoniacal possessions. I know well that at this day one seems much behind in criticism if he admits such possessions. According to certain teachers, such could have been only a fantastic form of folly, a very simple and very common fact, and Jesus Christ, in driving out demons and in speaking to demons, lent himself to a popular prejudice; it was an accommodation to it on his part. For ourselves, we declare that it is impossible for us to admit any such doctrine of accommodation without seriously detracting from the conception which we have of the Saviour. What! knowingly and willingly he could favor a gross superstition and flatter a stupid prejudice! And, more than this, he could in appearance drive out demons, whilst in reality he knew perfectly that a fixed idea is not a demon! But in that event he would have actually played the part of a comedian; he would have been not the divine Revealer, but one of the magicians of the East, so common in that age, who founded their power upon pretended miracles. And if he were not a comic actor, he would have been greatly deceived himself in a matter of capital importance, and we could no longer have absolute confidence in him. If men can thus free themselves from one of the facts with regard to which the testimony of the evangelists is the

most explicit, we know not what can possibly resist criticism. Moreover, this particular fact has a moral significance. It is impossible for us to explain how this demoniac influence was exerted; but we understand very well that in that supreme crisis of religious history the power of hell, like that of heaven, manifests itself with unwonted energy. It behooved it to make its most desperate effort to destroy God's plan. After believing itself the legitimate proprietor of humanity, it felt that man was about to slip away from its grasp. Now should not hell be shaken in all its parts in order to repossess itself of that fatal influence? To be able to deny the possibility of a similar operation of infernal powers upon humanity, we must know more intimately than it has been given us to know the connection of the visible with the invisible world. It is difficult to mark with precision the limits of the natural and the supernatural, and in the epochs of profound and universal upheaval it might often be said that the two spheres are confounded together. However this may be, we fully admit the demoniac possessions related in the gospel history. We believe that those possessions were not disconnected with the moral state of the sick persons. We think that no cause so effectually prepared the way for this lamentable and mysterious state as trouble induced by sin; the disease, doubtless, began in some terrible crisis of the inner life. It is quite certainly an evidence of the power granted to Satan to combat against the Redeemer. And did not this power equally burst forth in the unheard-of perversity of his enemies? Evil reaches a development in them

until then unknown. We feel that we are contemplating not merely an ordinary exhibition of sin, but also that which Scripture styles a "mystery of iniquity." There are in truth mysterious depths in evil which are almost as astonishing as the depths of goodness. Hell has its secrets, like heaven, surpassing, crushing human reason. There are certain days on which, behind the visible combatants, invisible combatants appear, and when the presence of demons is revealed, like the presence of God, by extraordinary signs. The demoniacs that confound us the most are not those who were delivered at the powerful word of the Master, they are the judges and the executioners of Jesus Christ, they are the wretches who cried out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" and who, beneath the cross, asked that his blood might fall upon them. Behold in this the most dreadful possession! There is an hour when the entire Jewish people is a phrensied demoniac, and when it is nothing but the passive instrument of hell enraged. Nothing proves more plainly than their conduct the direct and personal intervention of Satan in the struggle.

After Satan, or rather under his standard, nearly all the men of elevated rank in that nation combat against Jesus. The privileged classes, the rich, with but a few exceptions easily specified, were his enemies. We admit that the rich and the learned can become Christians, and that every day they are converted; but it is not the less true that this same fact, so noticeable in primitive times, is constantly reproduced in history. A great scope was given it by our Lord himself in that astonishing saying, "It is easier

for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." It is easy to understand that those who desire to live splendidly upon the earth, and who make use of their riches to nourish their vanity and augment their pleasures, are to be ranked among the enemies of Jesus Christ. He came into the world to combat all that which they are doing. He came to humble all that which is lofty, to bring to nothing all vain appearances, to crush all worldly influences and powers. He came not only to enjoin patience on those who suffer, but also renunciation on those who rejoice. He says to them all, "Give your goods, sell them for the poor;" that is, place your lives and your goods at the service of God and of suffering humanity. How can you expect that those believing that riches are given to them in order that they be clothed in fine linen, and live sumptuously and be insolent towards the poor, should not be enraged? At first they go away very sorrowful, like the rich young man in the Gospel, but quickly they return exasperated to fury, and they are the first to ask for the death of him who made the parable of Lazarus and the wicked rich man, and who preferred the widow's mite to their haughty and resounding alms. Let the rich of this day examine themselves very thoroughly to learn whether they are for or against Jesus Christ. The only way for them to be enlightened on this point is for them to inquire if they have become poor in spirit; for every rich man who has remained rich in heart is very surely in the ranks of the adversaries of our Lord.

The high council of the nation signalized itself above all by its animosity against Jesus Christ. How often have men elevated in authority played this sad part anew! Earthly dignities, when they are not received as a high mission of charity, become the pedestal of the great idol, of the human *I* so universally adored. They raise pride to a degree of real intoxication. The consideration and flattery with which they are encompassed surround them with a triple rampart against humility. When Jesus Christ appears announcing universal condemnation and free forgiveness, the great ones of this world who love that seeming grandeur tremble with indignation at being thus abased; they charge the gospel with being an overturning of society, a leaven of revolution, and their place is fixed among the enemies of true Christianity. But the most implacable adversaries of the gospel were found among those who were clothed with religious authority. The body of the priesthood were signalized by their violent hatred toward the Saviour. Nothing was more natural; those who make a traffic of religion, and derive from it their glory and their profit, denounce as usurpers whoever assail their credit by any religious reform. Jesus Christ, bringing into the world the universal priesthood, was the living condemnation of the priestly spirit, and whenever this spirit has not succeeded in prevailing over the gospel, or in perverting it, it has not been able to find anathemas and thunderbolts enough to curse and destroy the gospel.

We have already, on several occasions, named the Pharisees. They were conspicuous in the struggle against Jesus Christ. What concord, in fact, is possi-

ble between a formal religion and the religion of the Spirit? The Pharisees felt that that thrice dead mummy which they wrapped about in sacred fillets, and called religion, would fall into the dust at the first breath. They felt that their hypocrisy was unmasked by the simple appearance of Jesus Christ, and that in the presence of his holiness the falsehood of an external piety was clearly unvailed. They felt that their kingdom was at an end wherever Jesus Christ should triumph. Do they not feel this still to-day wherever they are found? Between them and Jesus Christ the struggle is even unto death, for he pursues them from one defense to another. From Judaism the Pharisee passed into the outward church; he went there with his long robe, his long prayers, and his traditions. From the great unbelieving church he passed into the churches of the Reformation; he established himself in them; he has fashioned them, in the course of time, more or less completely to his purposes; he re-appears in every church, even in the best organized, and, if need be, he seizes upon that which is most anti-pharisaical in its doctrines and its institutions in order to insinuate his deadly formalism. He may be recognized by his self-satisfaction, the cold and sterile uniformity of his piety, his dry and haughty dogmatism, his joy at not being like other men, his severity in judgment, and his hardness of heart. Such is the immortal Pharisee, the open or hidden enemy of Jesus Christ in all communions. God grant that he be not here listening to us, and applauding himself because our words do not concern him at all!

With regard to the Sadducee, he was the liberal

mind, the philosopher of Jerusalem. He rejected the greater part of revelation with the ease of a superior intelligence. He was not a precise devotee, he was a man of pleasure, with elegant manners. Does it not seem that, at least, he will be tolerant, and not join himself to the bitter enemies of Jesus Christ? Why should he unite on this point with hypocritical devotees, he who knows so well how to rally them on occasion, he who is a liberal philosopher? That then occurred, my brethren, which has occurred in all epochs of the history of the church; free-thinkers have always made common cause with formalists, in order to extirpate true Christianity from this world. They hate it as much. Jesus Christ has had as much reason to complain of the first as of the last. It is because he came to trouble their voluptuous life, and to disturb their convenient philosophy. He came to speak of judgment to those who were saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." He was a terrible witness to that invisible world which they wished to forget. It was quite needful, therefore, to free themselves of him in order to resume their life of pleasure. Let not men be deceived; the materialist philosopher is at bottom of the same mind with the Sadducee of Jerusalem, and beneath his fine words and his hypocritical homage there lurks an inveterate hatred toward the cross. To-day it manifests itself only by disdainful smiles and the expression of inward satisfaction at not believing, like simple people, in the letter of the gospel. But let the requirements of Christianity make themselves felt by our unbelieving philosophers in an earnest manner, let them be brought face to face with a true church

bearing its cross, and you will hear roars of rage coming forth from those men so exquisite in style, so liberal in spirit, those Athenians of philosophy. We know what the tolerance of free-thinkers is worth, since a vast number of them were seen crying out for the blood of the Just One, and since especially he was delivered up to be crucified by a skeptical philosopher whom no one surely will accuse of fanaticism after his disdainful question, "What is truth?"

A strange thing! After the rich, the men high in dignity, the priests, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the mass of the people, also, take sides against Jesus Christ. They went on to such a degree of delusion and of rage as to ask the deliverance of a wretched robber in order to be very sure that Jesus Christ should not escape the most shameful death. This people, it would seem, can have no pretext for this rage. Jesus Christ never despised them. He only did them good. And more than once this same people had shown their gratitude. They followed him; they seemed to love him. They even had, but a few days before the passover, a return of their enthusiasm. It avails little. It needed only a few agents of the Sanhedrim, a few Pharisees mingling with them, to raise the entire people against their benefactor, like a furious sea beneath the sudden impulsion of the wind. It is they who in the end furnished the adversaries of Jesus Christ with an army all ready for their work. The history of this weak and cruel people is the history of all who belong to the multitude of professed Christians, without having given themselves to the Saviour by an individual act. There is no root in their attachment to his per-

son; they follow him to-day for the same reason which will urge them to abandon him to-morrow. Since there is nothing of earnestness in their faith, as soon as, in order to follow Jesus Christ, it will become necessary to pass by the governor's hall and Calvary, they will not hesitate, they will be with the persecutors against the persecuted, and who knows if they will not be in the number of the most violent? They will go to the very end of the impulse received. Passive instruments of the wrath of others, they will basely serve that wrath, and will not stop even when confronted by crime. Always, even unto the end of time, shall we see the undecided and wavering multitude turn in the day of peril against Christ, and curse him whom they were coming to adore. Whoever has not separated himself from them by a positive and regenerative act that divided his life in two, is a latent enemy of Jesus Christ, whom circumstances sooner or later will bring to light. Satan counts upon him, and will know how to find him again in his day.

But whom have I seen among the adversaries of Jesus Christ? An apostle, one of the twelve, a companion of the Saviour. What! is it not enough that so many enemies should be leagued against him? must a cowardly defection weaken the ranks of his most natural defenders? Let it not be imagined that we have here the execution of a fatal decree, which, relieving Judas of his responsibleness, throws upon Jesus Christ the charge of having chosen him in order more effectually to ruin him, — a supposition which no theology in the world could induce us to accept, and which encounters the sovereign ban of conscience. The mystery is

great; who doubts it? We accept it all, provided it be not employed to overthrow the moral world. Let it be well considered that Christianity can not survive that, and with it it is either sustained or overthrown. Jesus Christ chose Judas to make of him an apostle, and not a demon, and if he became a demon, seek for the cause only in himself. God, who deduces good from evil, finally made use of him as he makes use of Satan himself; but he no more willed the crime of Judas than he willed the existence of hell. The apostle's defection remains, then, a moral fact, and it conveys to us a terrible warning. Here is a man who, doubtless, experienced at first a certain drawing towards Christ, and in whom the Master discerned certain inclinations compatible with a great mission. During nearly three years this man was with Jesus Christ, and yet he it was who sold him. He suffered the most deplorable propensities to gain the ascendency in him, and sought to gratify them in the service of the Master. He asked of him glory and power, and when he saw shame and the cross coming in their stead he wished to recompense himself for the disappointment, and he received the thirty pieces of silver. In like manner as, in all ages, the world has found men like Caiaphas to plot against Christ, and Pilate to condemn him, an ungrateful people to ask for his death; so Judases have always been found to betray him. There are few churches which can hear without legitimate terror these words of our Lord: "One of you shall betray me." Ah! how not work out one's salvation with fear and trembling when that saying is remembered! There has always been

found some one to betray when that was necessary for Satan's plans. My God! let it not be any one of us, for, of all evils, the greatest, the most frightful, is to betray the Saviour. Let us serve him for himself, for himself alone, with no thought of personal advantage or of human glory, and then we shall be able to say that the devil hath nothing in us.

Such, my brethren, are the enemies of Jesus Christ. They are numerous, they are skillful, they hold in their hands power and credit, they have a traitor upon whom they can depend. They are stopped by no scruple. Jesus Christ, on the contrary, is alone with a few disciples, who will speedily flee away; he has no external power; he desires none; he puts it far from him. How will he be able to resist such formidable enemies? His very weakness is his strength; weak on the human side, he is all-powerful in regard to God. He is one with the Father, and this oneness renders him invincible. He does not wish for human skill, because he has but one desire, which is to reveal the whole truth. Finally, he has a charity which even the rage of hell can not change. Therefore, the Lamb of God is, at the same time, that Lion of the tribe of Judah which prophecy has shown us going forth in his strength.

Now that we know the combatants, let us contemplate the combat. It will be easy to bring rapidly before our minds its successive phases.

The first period in the ministry of Jesus Christ had ended in the synagogue at Capernaum. He knows that henceforth the conflict will be joined and maintained without interruption until the hour of his death.

He wishes to prepare his disciples and to prepare himself for those weighty occurrences, and he withdraws with them far from the ordinary theater of his activity. This he has always done on the eve of the great crises in his life. Our Saviour's need of solitude is remarkable. He can never do without the desert; it is there that he will gather up new strength for the days of trial. He shows by this that the source of all fruitful activity, like the source of all mighty rivers, is hidden in solitary places; that it gushes forth down precipitous hights, far from the noises of the world. Let not the church forget the Master's example, and, like him, let it frequently have its vigils of arms in the desert; let her take refuge, before engaging in combat, in the holy solitude of divine communion; let her often return thither; and let her say to herself that if the Master felt the need of this, much more ought his disciples to bathe themselves in God, and to renew their spiritual strength in silence and solitude.

Jesus Christ crossed over the lake of Gennesaret to go by the north into Galilee, to Cæsarea Philippi. On this journey he took occasion to converse with his disciples concerning the mission which they had fulfilled in his name in the villages of Judæa and Galilee, and by which he had designed to give them practical instruction with regard to the work to which they were called. He perceives that, notwithstanding the weakness of their faith, they are evidently raised above the prejudices of their cotemporaries, and he shows in connection with Peter's saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," that the explicit and courageous confession of his name will be,

in all ages, the foundation-rock of the church. At the same time he plainly announces his death to his disciples. After that epoch he frequently discourses to them concerning it. He desired to prepare them for it, and also to make them understand that that death is, on his part, a willing sacrifice, of which he was fully conscious. The prophetic words of Jesus Christ on this subject are of very great importance. He was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, because he foresaw and accepted his death. On the northern frontier of Galilee, he met with a Canaanitish woman whose persevering faith, leaving us the most admirable example of importunate prayer, obtained from his power an illustrious miracle. The miracle of the transfiguration occurred on the return from this journey. Have you observed what was the subject of the interview which Moses and Elias had with Jesus Christ during that hour of glory, encompassed by the heavenly light? They spoke, we are told, of his death and of his crucifixion. This is an additional proof that this period of retirement was, for the Saviour, a time of solemn preparation for the bitter sufferings which awaited him.

After having thus strengthened himself upon the glorious mount, and received the signal testimony of his Father, Jesus Christ repairs to Jerusalem. Going to Jerusalem is going to the combat; he knows it; but the moment has come to meet it with indomitable energy. All details I put aside, confining myself to the general outlines. I shall especially seek to bring out the Saviour's attitude in this struggle, the bloody close of which was known to him.

He enters the holy city at the time of celebrating one of the great Jewish festivals, the feast of tabernacles. He knows that since the miracle of healing performed on the Sabbath day he has implacable enemies in Jerusalem; he knows that they have the power to injure him. If he consulted human prudence, he would be quiet; since for him to speak, to announce his doctrine, is to put himself in opposition to the Sanhedrim. What will he do? St. John informs us by relating the language of some of his hearers: "Is not this he," said the Jews, "whom they seek to kill? but lo, he speaketh boldly." You hear it; he speaketh openly. He does not teach in secret; no, he enters the temple, where the multitude flowed together, and proclaims his doctrine, in the very faces of his adversaries, with astonishing force. He has thus taught us what position the church ought to take in this great, ever renewed combat of truth, and with what bold fidelity it ought to reply to the threats of its enemies. He who speaks openly at Jerusalem is he who said on a recent occasion, "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." He showed by his example that his disciples should acknowledge established authority, and submit to its requirements, so long as it does not infringe upon the rights of God. But the same conscientious motive which leads them to obey within these limits, constrains them to disobey as soon as they are passed over. Jesus speaks openly because it is a duty for him to speak when the salvation of souls is involved. The great Envoy of the Father, the messenger of his love, can not keep silence. What! because it has pleased a few sinful men to put the truth under

interdict, and to enjoin silence on its witness and representative, should he be silent? He knows that he brings to lost souls a word of healing, and should he be silent? God has said to him, "Comfort, comfort my people," and can he keep silence? He has seen that people like lost sheep in the desert, and can he be silent? Let those who have no life-giving word to utter be still and prudent. Jesus Christ will speak; he will speak openly, because he has the words of eternal life, and men will hear him cry out, two paces off from the priests and the doctors, who are determined to imprison him, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!" He will not go to man to ask permission to save and unbind souls. He will speak openly of the claims of divine love, and of his own charity; he will speak in like manner in all circumstances, before his judges as before his disciples; his voice will be stifled only in his blood, and from that blood itself shall be lifted up a testimony more powerful than all his discourses. Thus will speak all those who shall have a doctrine of salvation to announce to the world that perisheth; they can not keep silence. They will not be able to keep back the good news of forgiveness, and whoever can keep it to himself, under pretense that he is forbidden to proclaim it, proves by that act that he has not himself received it. This freedom in bearing witness to the gospel is not only the fulfillment of a duty, but it is also the secret of an irresistible power. It develops such a strength of conviction that it draws to itself souls which feel the need of vital and solid belief. It is as the seal of a divine mission. Thus we hear the people crying out when they

listen to Jesus Christ, "Of a truth this is the Prophet." This courage produces an indelible impression upon the hearts of men; it places him who exhibits it above all forms of difficulty and of opposition. May the church of our times not deprive itself of the power to be derived from indomitable fidelity!

Our Lord not only announced the good news of salvation; he also openly contended against error. With regard to his apologetic, we have seen how he established the truth of his doctrine by appealing to the consciences of his hearers. We have already remarked how often his sayings were stamped with severity. But he went still further. He did not content himself with showing in a general way that unbelief had its origin in sin. He assailed the men of his day, he characterized them as they deserved, he censured the specific form of sin or error which he encountered. He unmasked his adversaries, he even hurled against them terrible anathemas. His word had a keen edge for false teachers and hypocrites. Run over the discourses which he delivered at this period, and which are contained in the eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters of St. John's Gospel, and you will perceive that never has more controversial vigor been manifested than by Jesus Christ. "Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John viii. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men! Ye devour widows' houses! Ye fools and blind; ye blind guides which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Ye are like unto whited sepul-

chers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Matt. xxv. Is this the lowly and gentle Master who speaks? Is it Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the friend of the afflicted, he who takes up little children to bless them? Yes, my brethren, it is ever assuredly the Saviour. Not satisfied with affirming the truth, he denounced in indignant language the false teachers of his day: he did not share the scruples entertained by so many Christians who are easily scandalized by any lively attack upon the perverters of our holy religion. The example of Jesus Christ teaches us that the church in its contests for the truth can not dispense with vigorous controversy. Doubtless it should be elevated, like that of Jesus Christ, it ought to be earnest, it ought to be constantly directed to the heart and conscience; but let it be energetic and incisive. To affirm the truth is without doubt the first duty of the church. She ought to build; her work is essentially positive; but she ought also to destroy. It would not suffice to set forth the gospel unless the doctrines opposed to it are overthrown. The human heart is so abundant in illusions, that it would seek to reconcile error with truth, if it were not clearly placed in a position where it was obliged to choose between the two. It is necessary, then, that Christians strongly protest against every departure from the truth, and that they indicate aloud and with unmistakable emphasis that which to them seems opposed to the gospel. So long as they have not fulfilled this duty, they are more or less responsible for the misconceptions authorized by their silence.

And how avoid protesting with some warmth when one knows the worth of souls and sees them led astray by the devices of the devil? Let those who judge spiritual blindness to be without danger, employ all possible devices to undeceive their erring brethren. But we who think such blindness deadly, we shall tear off with hands that may seem rude that covering which is upon their eyes. If we are censured as wanting in charity, let men understand that the reproach is hurled at Jesus Christ himself, for our language can never equal the burning indignation of his words. For ourselves, we feel in this the same love which caused him to weep over the unbelief of Jerusalem. Thus weeping over it, how could he fail to experience a holy indignation against those who instigated its rebellion?

To speak freely, to denounce openly the false doctors of his day, was not enough for Jesus Christ. He did not cease for one moment to do good, and his works of compassion dealt the most powerful blows to his adversaries. They also precipitated the termination of the conflict. The wonderful healing of the man born blind excited great astonishment in the people, and consequently great rage in the Sanhedrim, which was yet further augmented by the simplicity and candor of the testimony given by the healed blind man. Our Lord thought fit a second time to withdraw from the hatred of his enemies. He repaired anew to Galilee; but he abode there only a short time, and returned through Samaria to Jerusalem for the feast of the dedication. The opposition between him and the Jews was more decided than

ever. He escaped several murderous attempts, and withdrew with his disciples into Peræa, on the banks of the Jordan. There he learns the news of the sickness of Lazarus. He braves all dangers, that he may go and comfort the sisters of his friend, and raises him from the dead in the presence of a great number of the Jewish people. This miracle, performed at the gates of Jerusalem, completes the fury of his enemies. They fully determined to secure his death; and we now enter upon the third period of his ministry, which embraces his last journey to Jerusalem, his passion and his death. Thus, notwithstanding all the dangers which encompassed him, Jesus Christ continued his mission of charity. He did not suffer himself to be absorbed in his controversy with the Pharisees; he sought to do good, to comfort the afflicted, to heal the sick, as during the first period of his ministry. Nothing could turn him aside from his work of scattering benefits. A sublime example for the church militant, which possesses no better weapons of defense and of conquest than her charity! Let us take heed never to neglect the work of consolation which we have in charge, under pretense that we must reply to urgent attacks. Let us answer them, like Jesus Christ, by opening the treasures of grace, and dispensing them with the utmost liberality. The enemies of Christianity are effectually vanquished by this answer of charity, which demonstrates irresistibly the excellence of that religion which they calumniate, and lays a coal of fire upon their heads.

The adversaries of our Saviour very plainly acknowledge themselves vanquished by him, since they could

oppose nothing to his last miracles but an abominable crime. What a frightful part they play during all this struggle! While Jesus contends against them, preaching his doctrine openly, consoling the afflicted, healing the sick, and attacking the unworthy leaders of the nation, the latter are employing the most treacherous means for his destruction; deceit and violence are their only weapons. At one time, they prepare snares for Jesus Christ, and accuse him falsely; at another, they urge the people to stone him. They have no other argument wherewith to oppose him save this senseless argument of brutal force. When our Lord has overthrown them by a final and most illustrious miracle, they summon against him murder and treason. He must die! such is their conclusion. To buy up Judas, to pay for false witnesses, such is their policy. They do not suspect that they are thus constructing one of the most powerful arguments in favor of Christianity: in placing themselves upon the ground of violence and deceit they have shown that Christianity can be trammeled only by infamous and abominable means, and that it is impossible to overcome it in an honorable warfare.

We have reached the final period in the ministry of Jesus Christ. His hour has come, that solemn hour of inexpressible suffering and of perfect obedience. Now more than ever are we enabled to say with John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!" Behold him offered up a bleeding sacrifice! After the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus Christ withdrew with his disciples to Ephraim, near the wilderness. John xi. 54. The pass-

over was nigh at hand, therefore but a few days were spent in that retired place, and at Jericho he rejoined the numerous caravans which were proceeding to the holy city from all parts of the country. Once more he manifested his power by healing blind Bartimeus, as also by the very striking conversion of Zaccheus the publican. From Jericho Jesus Christ journeys to Bethany, to pass the Sabbath in the family of Lazarus. Already had he often come hither to find repose in its bosom. He was tenderly beloved by that household, and to that love a sentiment of ardent gratitude had been added since the resurrection of Lazarus. Mary, whom Luke has shown us listening to Jesus, and whose appearance, scarcely outlined by the evangelist, has come down to us as a type of deep inward piety, full of sweetness and beauty, — Mary seeks to express all that is in her heart of gratitude and love for the Master by lavishing on his feet a box of fragrant ointment. Leave it for a covetous Judas to complain of this, and bless her for having rendered this pious homage to our Saviour! Alas! soon those feet will be torn by nails, soon he will be delivered up to shame. It is sweet to think that on this sinful earth he had already found hearts who understood him, and who comforted him in anticipation of his sufferings. Our Lord leaves Bethany to go up to the feast. The caravans overtook him on the journey. They have doubtless heard of the resurrection of Lazarus; they experience toward him the enthusiasm of the early days of his ministry, and they lead him in triumph to Jerusalem, casting branches of palm-trees in the way, and singing hymns to his praise. Jesus Christ consented to this triumph in order to re-

mind his disciples in a visible manner that glory belongeth unto him, and that if he freely deprives himself of it, the day will come in which he shall seize it again in its most resplendent luster. The day of palms is a prophecy of the future triumph of the church, and of its Divine Head. At Jerusalem, Jesus Christ once more encounters his constant enemies, who endeavor by means of subtle questions to change his triumph into confusion; but the Saviour's indignation bursts forth upon them with terrible and vehement energy, and they have not a word to reply. To this same epoch pertain the prediction of Jesus Christ concerning Jerusalem and the future of the church, and those solemn parables in which he commends to his disciples the watchfulness of the wise virgins and the faithfulness of the good servants in the use of the talents entrusted to them.

Jesus Christ has but a few hours to spend upon the earth before the great sacrifice. He goes to the upper chamber where the passover feast is made ready. No words of man can describe the scene which there took place during that solemn night. After having washed the feet of his disciples, to teach them by a striking symbol his conception of humility, he breaks the bread and gives them the cup, saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." The supper is instituted as the sacrament of redemption and the feast of love. The traitor has just gone out to finish his accursed work. Then the Master poured his heart into the heart of his disciples. Promises, consolations, the effusion of a holy and divine love,—all is comprehended in those last discourses in which there seems to breathe the soul of Je-

sus Christ. Nothing can be compared with them. It is the heaven of Christianity which is opened; that region of purity and love, so seldom discerned, here is spread forth full of light, of depth, of peace.

After having spoken to his disciples, Christ speaks for them to his Father. He lays them upon his bosom, and places them in the eternal arms, and then can say, with his eyes raised toward him, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

He has finished it without doubt, but it remains to crown it by his suffering. He repaired with his disciples to the garden of Olives. Once more he seeks the desert; he is about to prepare himself for the last combat. What a night was that in Gethsemane! Whilst the disciples are sleeping on account of sorrow, he is there alone confronting the terrible sacrifice which he must offer on the morrow. All the bitternesses of human life are poured into his cup. How he groans! He utters great cries, he drags himself in the dust, drops of blood wet his forehead! Such is the impiety of some men that they mock at his anguish, and derive from it a railing accusation against him. Let them know that by means of that anguish and that extreme abasement we recognize our deliverer! That Saviour who struggles and who suffers, who prays and who weeps, it is he whom we need; for that cry, "Father, thy will be done!" issues from a truly human heart, since it issues from a broken heart, and that cry, as regards our salvation, drowns the rebellious cry of the first Adam.

The day of immolation has dawned. Here is Judas, here are his impious company. But they can not en-

dure the glorious brightness of holiness which is poured forth over the entire person of Christ. They fall down as if thunder-struck, and it is only because he wills to be delivered up to them that they are enabled to seize upon him. From the insults of the Sanhedrim he passes to the outrages of the Pretorium. In spite of his conscience, a cowardly Pilate condemned him to death, and crowned him with thorns. He was led forth to Calvary bending beneath his cross. The Jews crucified him between two robbers, and, moreover, had the abominable courage to mock at his sufferings.

Fix your eyes upon that cross, my brethren, and turn them not away from it. It is that which consummates your redemption! All the sufferings which constitute condemnation are comprehended in that sacrifice, comprehended and accepted in one act of absolute obedience, accepted by the Just and Holy One, and, consequently, transformed into a life-giving expiation. Shall I speak of bodily sufferings? I appeal to those sacred members so horribly mangled. Shall I speak of sufferings of the heart? I appeal to that ignominy, to those fleeing disciples, and to that afflicted group of a mother and a weeping friend near the accursed tree, and upon whom Christ turned a look so full of sorrow and of love. Shall I speak of the soul's anguish, of that cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What a mysterious identity between condemned humanity and the only Son of the Father is revealed in that wonderful saying, which no human explanation can satisfactorily interpret! Shall I speak of the grief which combines and blends together all others, of that which is eminently

the wages of sin, of death! However stupendous the prodigy may appear, the Prince of life did die. He was buried. The wages of sin he received, he, the innocent one. Show us a suffering, a single one, wanting to his cross, except that which is caused by remorse! Show us a single thorn wanting in his bloody crown! If it be true that all the sorrows of human life have burst upon that innocent head, if he has made of it a single offering, presenting it to his Father in his freedom and his holiness, confess with him that nothing more remains to be done to accomplish salvation, for there is nothing more to suffer, nothing more to accept, and say with him, "It is finished!"

Yes, *all is finished!* That vast work which we have endeavored to depict to you, which began on the morrow of the Fall, which was continued during forty preparatory centuries, unceasingly prosecuted by the Son of God himself, behold it now reaching its final term! Divine love is no longer confronted by rebellion, but before it stands a love equal to its own. Between humanity and him there exists no more disharmony. There is perfect harmony, absolute union: and this union is man's reintegration in his lofty position, it is salvation. Over against the revolt in Eden we can set the sacrifice on Golgotha; to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree of the cross: to rebellious humanity, humanity obedient even unto death; —in one word, to all condemnation, to all ruin, Jesus Christ! therefore, henceforth we desire to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified. We wish to pitch our tents upon the mount of the cross. We desire to learn there anew every day the love of

our God, the charity of our Saviour, and to read our pardon in those bloody characters which alone could write it out for a race so perverse as ours! We desire to sing there the praises of the Lamb who was slain for us, and who has taken away the sins of the world! We desire to draw love and comfort thence, and dying unto ourselves with Christ crucified, we desire to make ourselves ready to live the life everlasting with Christ who has risen again!

CHAPTER XII.

JESUS CHRIST AS KING.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." —1 Tim. iii. 16.

WE have contemplated two aspects of the work of Jesus Christ. We have considered him as Prophet and as Sacrifice: to-day we propose to consider him as King. We shall thus have completed this great and magnificent subject, — completed at least the sketching of its more exterior outlines. To penetrate into its depths our entire life would not suffice, for even eternity could not exhaust it.

We have found again and adored redeeming love in the Prophet who traversed Judæa and Galilee, proclaiming the kingdom of God, and in the holy victim sacrificed upon Calvary; in like manner we will adore him in the divine King of the church. The word of Jesus Christ was the word of love, his sacrifice was the sacrifice of love, and his royalty was the royalty of love. Our text, after having set forth the incarnation in these words, "God was manifest in the flesh," presents to us in the following words the successive phases of the kingship of our Lord: "He was justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto

the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." His resurrection, his ascension, the power of his gospel over the world and over the church, — such are the different stages of his glory. Let us rapidly survey these in order to perceive that his kingly work was not less perfect than his prophetic and sacerdotal, and that we have to look for another king no more than we have to expect another prophet and another sacrifice.

If Jesus Christ enters in a signal manner upon his kingship only after his resurrection, it is not the less true that never did he cease to be king in a spiritual sense. He no more ceased to be king than to be God. His divinity, like his royalty, was vailed; he had willingly lessened its luster by his humiliation. The King of glory had taken the form of a servant, but under this servant form he nevertheless remained the King of glory. We are told that celestial spirits, whose penetration could not be baffled or misled by appearances, adored him at the very time when he was undergoing his greatest humiliations. He was adored by angels in the wilderness of temptation. In more than one circumstance his royal kingly character shone out as with a vivid gleam of lightning. "What manner of man is this?" said they; "for he commandeth even the winds and the sea." "Who is this that forgiveth sins?" And stranger it was that, before the tribunal of his judge, and upon the cross, the eternal kingship in-dwelling in Jesus Christ was displayed in the most positive manner. Recall to mind, my brethren, the astonishing declaration of our Lord to Pilate. "Art thou a king?" the proconsul disdain-

fully asked, as if to bring out more plainly by this cold irony the contrast between his position as an accused person and his high claims. "Thou sayest that I am a king," answered Jesus Christ. "Where, then, is thy right, thy power?" Behold it! "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Thus, according to Jesus Christ, testimony borne to the truth invested him with actual royalty. It is because in very deed, my brethren, truth was made to reign; and truth is sovereign by a divine and absolute right. Being the eternal thought of God, it ought on every ground to be realized. It can not fail to triumph, for its overthrow would be the overthrow of God himself. In all ages it is to the truth that the final word belongs, the word which brings light into chaos, into the ever-recurring chaos of human opinions. It also has deep roots, because it is rooted in God. That which is contrary to it has but a borrowed life, essentially transitory. Every idea, every doctrine which does not proceed from it, is destined to become its own destroyer. However brilliant may be its blossoming, men will quickly say of it, "I passed by, and it was no more to be seen." Truth marches on slowly, but surely, to universal dominion. Queen in heaven, it is destined to reign gloriously upon the earth. Of little moment is the ignominy to which it is often surrendered. The shame is but for a time, the glory will be eternal. Of little moment that it should be seemingly supplanted by usurpers. Not the less is truth alone queen and sovereign. A new usurpation prepares for it a new triumph. Whoever bears testimony unto it allies himself with its

glorious destinies. Whoever utters a word of truth utters a royal word, victorious over all gainsaying. We share in its royalty in proportion to the fidelity which we bear to it. And thus, if there be found a man who possesses it not in part, but wholly, and who is identified with it, we can say that that man is king in an absolute sense. That man is found: it is the God-man. He has not only been the witness for the truth, he was also its living expression. He could say, "I am the truth." With equal right he could say, "I am king;" for, of all royalties, even in our sinful world, the truest, the most abiding, the alone immortal and invincible, is that of the truth. It is good to remember this when we see truth shackled, outraged, and trodden under foot.

Jesus Christ also showed himself a king on the cross. "Having spoiled principalities and powers," says St. Paul, "he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Col. ii. 15. Those principalities and powers, in biblical language, represent the forces of evil acting in the world and subduing it. In two ways has Jesus Christ signally acted the kingly part toward them by his death. First he made a spectacle of them, and then he triumphed over them. His enemies had imagined that by nailing him to the accursed tree and inflicting upon him the punishment of a slave, they were dishonoring him for ever. They were mistaken; the infamy was theirs, and did not pertain to the victim. Then was disclosed the essential character of this world, the enemy of God, which in the ordinary course of human life dissembles its hate and endeavors successfully to pass as honest. Behold it at

the cross fully unmasked; it had cast away its vail, so often woven with seeming virtues, with hypocritical moderation and vain religiousness. In this terrible day it stands forth wholly revealed, murderer of the Holy One and the Just, able to discover no punishment for him equal to its wrath. Long had it cherished in the depth of its heart this impious hatred toward the Messiah. But hate had been dumb; now it speaks, it manifests itself with entire freedom. That which it was saying in low tones has burst forth in the fearful cry, "Crucify him, Crucify him!" The powers of the world are, in truth, made a show to heaven and to the earth. They found in the cross a tree of infamy, and henceforth they can not separate themselves from it. They are torn from the obscurity in which they loved to dwell, plotting against God and against his Anointed. This man, condemned to death, covered with the hootings of an ungrateful people, who appears to be the most forsaken and feeble of men, is in reality a conqueror who drags after him his vanquished foes and makes a show of them openly.

Triumphant conqueror: the word is not too strong, my brethren, and the apostle is justified in adding that the cross of Jesus Christ has triumphed over the powers of this world. At first the world sought this excess of torments inflicted upon our Saviour to harass his soul. Satan had endeavored to take him in the snare of pleasure and earthly glory. Satan had been shamefully vanquished, as we have seen. He endeavored when Christ was upon the cross to crush that strong and holy soul by suffering urged to its utmost limits. And he finds that he has only shed a new luster over

the moral perfection of our Lord. If Jesus Christ groaned in Gethsemane with the bloody cup in view, this groaning had no other result than to render his obedience more real, more human, more redemptive. The odious ingratitude of the Jews could not develop in his heart a single bitter or irritated feeling. When fastened to the cross not the less does he remain the incarnation of charity. It is not possible to diminish that great, that immense love, which itself alone reveals his divinity. You may smite his head, spit upon his face, tear his limbs with nails and cover them with his blood, mock at his suffering, offer him vinegar when he says "I thirst," and drown his groans with your laughter, you may immolate him and slay him, you can not enkindle in him one spark of anger. Draw near to him at the moment when his soul is about to leave his body, in which it is enfeebled by the greatest sorrows. Listen to the last words of his agony, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Such were his vengeance and his wrath. Acknowledge your powerlessness, and with this forgiveness wholly enveloping and as it were crushing you, confess that your victim triumphs over you by strength of love, and that never, even amid the glories of heaven, did he manifest more of greatness than in that doleful hour of his humiliation. Moreover, let us not forget that this death is the sacrifice of redemption, is the crushing of the serpent's head. Often in the confusion of a combat a victorious chief, covered with dust and blood, seems nearer defeat than triumph. But of what importance are appearances? He knows that the enemy is in flight, and that he is dealing him the

last blows. When Jesus Christ cried out, as he gave up his spirit, "It is finished!" he uttered his cry of victory. This cry escaped from his breast heaving with his last sigh, but it had not failed to break the power of the great adversary. The powers of the world were vanquished. They did not suspect it; on the contrary, they imagined themselves to be delivered from this formidable representative of the cause of God. At the very hour when hell was perhaps congratulating itself on having destroyed the plan of divine love, what was this crucified, this vanquished one doing? He was opening heaven to a poor repentant sinner. "This night," said he to the penitent thief, "shalt thou be with me in paradise." What more striking proof that the wicked man, as always, had done a work which deceived him, and that Jesus Christ had indeed triumphed on the cross over the powers of the world, after having made a show of them openly?

But, my brethren, let us hasten to declare it, this moral kingship of which Jesus Christ could not be deprived for a single instant could not suffice unto him. It was to terminate in an outward and resplendent royalty; it was to have its crown and its scepter. It is not necessary to believe that obedience and righteousness are recompensed only in a mystical manner, if I may thus speak, by the inward happiness which attends them in the heart. This moral satisfaction is indeed a precious compensation for the sacrifices to which he is exposed who sincerely and habitually does good in this world, but it is not the only consolation of the persecuted just man. He ought to know that if the present is against him in

an earthly point of view, the future is for him in every sense. Were it otherwise, the lies of the tempter would be partly justified. He aims to make us believe in a kind of opposition between goodness and happiness. According to his perfidious suggestions, evil and felicity would be on one side, and on the other afflictions and duty. It is important that this false and dangerous method of stating the question of good and evil should be set aside, and that it be understood that it is not true in fact that man has to choose between goodness and happiness. Taking things not merely in the circle of the finite, where everything begins and nothing ends, where no ultimate judgment can be passed upon anything whatever, looking at them from the point of view in eternity, which is the only true and satisfactory position, happiness and goodness must appear to be indissolubly united. The law of goodness is the expression of that will which governs the world. He who has established it is the Almighty, and he designs to give it scope and fulfillment in all domains. It follows that the narrow way of obedience and sacrifice, beginning on a hard and stony soil, rises towards hights increasingly serene, until it opens up into light and glory. On the contrary, the broad way plunges down more and more into the dark abyss until it wholly disappears. If then the road to Calvary did not lead to the gate of heaven, the law of God would lose its absolute character. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ must necessarily terminate in triumph and in kingly power; and it is con-

cerning this outward royalty that we have now to discourse to you, as we follow our text step by step.

It declares to us first, of our Saviour, that he was *justified in the Spirit.* What are we to understand by these words? For Jesus Christ to be justified in the Spirit, is to receive in a solemn manner before the world the confirmation of his words: such justification will be as a divine seal affixed to his mission, an irrefutable proclamation of the righteousness of his cause and the acceptance of his sacrifice by his Father. But in order to a justification like this, nothing less than his resurrection is necessary. If he does not rise from the dead, it is proven that he is only an impostor or an incomplete Saviour. He came to add his name to that long list of pretended Messiahs which is but the list of the deceits of humanity. Jesus Christ declared in advance that he would not remain in the tomb. If he remains there he is nothing but a fallible man, and his teaching, invalidated on one point, loses all worth in our eyes. Jesus Christ declared himself to be the Son of God; if he who represented himself as the creative Word can not escape from the power of death, it is evident to all that he was but one of us. Finally, and above all, he declared himself to be the Redeemer, the vanquisher of sin. If he does not rise again, his death is only a heroic and sublime death, but a death without expiatory value. His last words were the dreams of a man in his agony, and the wind carried away his "It is finished!" like one of those words that escape in the delirium of the dying. The resurrection is therefore the only sufficient and complete

justification of his ministry. It is not only the crown of his work, it is its necessary completion.

We know that this is one of the miracles which occasion the greatest scandal to unbelief, and which seem to it beyond all others absurd and impossible. It descants skillfully upon the laws of our physical being; it demonstrates with force and clearness that on natural grounds of view the principle of life once extinguished can not be renewed, and it regards the resurrection of our Saviour as a ridiculous fable. As for ourselves, between a material impossibility and a moral impossibility, we do not hesitate. Only the latter appears to us absolute and insurmountable. We also believe in the permanence and inflexibility of the law of creation; but this law, the axis around which everything turns, is not a material law, it is a moral law. The laws of the physical world are necessarily subordinated to it; it is for that law that God has already shaken the earth (Heb. xii. 26), and it is in order to give it a supreme consecration that he has said, "Yet once more I will shake not the earth only, but also heaven;" as if to show us in the most solemn manner that the entire system of natural laws which rules the outward world is nothing in his eyes compared with the fundamental law of the spiritual world. Let them not speak to us, then, any more of the impossibility of the resurrection. That which is really impossible we may learn from the language of an apostle: "It was not possible," said St. Peter, "that he should be holden of the pains of death." Acts ii. 24. That could not be, because death being the wages of sin, the justice of God

would be at fault if Jesus Christ were held by its bonds after the redemptive sacrifice. God could not a second time ask for the payment of a debt already discharged. These bands of death must then be broken in the case of Jesus Christ, in the name of a higher necessity than all the necessities of the order of nature. It is impossible that he be held, as it is impossible that God be unjust. What matters it then that on the night following the day of Christ's death all seems finished to his enemies, and even to his friends, who go apart to shed bitter tears of despair? What means the sepulcher with the stone rolled up to the door of it? What avails that guard placed around the tomb to watch it? Of what importance is it that one night passes away, that another day also passes, and that the third day begins before death has yet yielded up his prey? Be not disquieted at the sight of those women who bring consecrated perfumes to embalm the dead. What avail those funeral observances, which show so little faith and so much affection for the Master? Notwithstanding all these appearances, it is not possible that he should remain in this sepulcher. The stone is heavy; it shall be rolled away by the angels of God; at the sight of them the guard stationed there will flee away, and the pious women who were coming sorrowfully to pay him the last offices will return with a song of triumph: for, lo! on the morning of the third day he hath risen again. He has thrown off the winding-sheet, and soon he will be known by the palpable signs of his crucifixion, as by the sounds of his voice, which causes the hearts of his disciples

to burn within them. Justified by the Spirit before his own, through their testimony he shall be justified before the world, and this testimony shall be so clear, so precise and unanimous, notwithstanding differences in detail which more plainly exhibit their agreement in things essential, that to call this in doubt will be overthrowing the very foundations of historic certainty. The testimony of their life and of their death will be yet more powerful, for by their calmness in suffering, by their joy in bonds or beneath the blows of their persecutors, by their joyful hope in the midst of death and amid tortures, they will not cease to declare he hath risen; and therein is the secret of our courage and our peace. If it were not so, we should be of all men most miserable. (1 Cor. xv. 19.) But it is so; and although the scorn and offscourings of the world, pressed down and crushed on every side, in wounds, in prisons, in toils, in watchings, in fastings, like sheep appointed to the slaughter, we are nevertheless the happiest of men, in the strength of that glorious resurrection.

You know, my brethren, the importance attributed by the ancient church to this fact of the resurrection of our Saviour, a fact which in our day is kept too much in the shade. In reading the discourses of the apostles, we feel they could not weary in speaking of it. This great and glorious third day brings to them all light and all consolation. They no longer saw in Jesus Christ simply the gentle Master and the meek victim, but also the King of glory and the Prince of life. They discerned beneath the visible sacrifices the great and mysterious sacrifice of God made man; all the

past assumed a profound meaning for them ; and thus the kingship of Jesus Christ threw back a new and more brilliant light over his life. Moreover, his resurrection was in their eyes the triumphant evidence of the gospel. They thought that in like manner as it had scattered away their unbelief, it would bring conviction to hearts not hardened. Finally, they knew that Christ risen is the first-fruits of those who sleep, and that death had been conquered for them as for him. Beside his empty sepulcher they were enabled to lift up that hymn of Christian immortality, an immortality based not on philosophical suppositions, but on a positive fact: " O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? " The resurrection of Christ, the second Adam, the chief of humanity, proclaims, therefore, our own resurrection. And thus it is for the Christian a source of inexhaustible consolations. It disarms death in his thoughts, dissipates his terrors, and softens their bitterness, for it takes from sorrow that irrevocable character which would transform into despair. May that kingship of Christ then be your consolation in the day of painful separations, and may it assist you, as it did the patriarch, to rise up from among your dead with a bleeding heart, but comforted by so great a hope. Say within yourselves, as you see them descend into the tomb, It is not possible that they remain in the bands of death, for those bands have been broken for us, as for Christ, and the day will come when their reanimated dust, having been changed into a glorious body, shall be a new witness of the efficacy of his redemption, and, as it were, a second justification by the Spirit for his work.

He was seen of angels, we read also in our text; this is the second stage in his glory, the second sign of his royalty. We understand by these words the return of Jesus Christ into the abode of divine light, where the blessed spirits enjoy the presence and the vision of God. I know well that in speaking of such an abode one runs the risk of being charged with materialism; and if we believe certain teachers, the ascension of Jesus Christ is a gross idea, one of the follies pertaining to the infancy of the church, which she is bound to lay aside in her full maturity. For ourselves, we believe in it, not only because the testimony which relates this fact is authoritative in our judgment, but also because we have need to believe in it. Doubtless communion with God is not confined to time or space, and heaven diffuses its pure felicity through any heart that is intimately united with God. But it is not the less true that it is a bitter suffering, even with heaven within, to inhabit an abode saddened by sin; this perpetual contrast between the soul's life and the sad spectacle of a defiled world is not one of the least afflictions of the just man. We have need of harmony, and certainly the sight of evil constituted no small part of the long-continued suffering of him whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity. We do then firmly believe that there is an abode where these painful contrasts will not be found, where God will be all in all. That abode, which by an image as sublime as it is popular we compare to the purest, the most beautiful and the grandest object in our knowledge by calling it heaven, was to be thrown open again as the palace of his glory before Christ risen from the

dead. Then he would exchange the society of all men like Caiaphas and Judas for that of holy angels, and instead of the scorn of a world which was unable to comprehend him, he would receive the honor of which he was worthy. Long enough had he been exposed to shame; the everlasting hosanna would now silence the shouts of an ingrate people. "The away with him!" of the impious and ungrateful multitude will give place to the song of the Lamb. The mocking laugh of the Pharisee will be succeeded by the hymn of seraphim. Ah! we understand the glory comprehended in those simple words, "He was seen of angels." With what holy enthusiasm, when the gates of heaven were lifted up that their King might come in, did they not pour forth their adoring songs, as if to compensate by their divine emulation for the outrages of the Pretorium and of Calvary! What an hour was that when they beheld him again, and when he again sat down in the midst of their faithful band, upon that throne which he had left to offer the holy sacrifice of love, and on which he resumed his place in the triumph of love! He was seen of angels!

And here, my brethren, a comparison, or rather a contrast, presents itself to our minds. We showed you in our first discourse, on the morrow of the Fall, Eden closed, and seraphim with their flaming swords guarding it against man banished and condemned. He who to-day is seen of angels, celebrated by them, encompassed by their innumerable choirs, is also a man; or rather it is man anew, *the* man, the chief of the race, the type of its destinies. It is redeemed human nature which is welcomed thus by blessed spirits;

it is humanity which, according to the expressions of the apostles, is seated in heavenly places! Compare this day of ascension with the day of condemnation. Compare the seraphim at the gates of Eden with the angels of paradise re-opened, and perceive in this very contrast the greatness of the redemptive work. From that desolation to this glory how long is the road to be traversed! How can any one be astonished at the price paid for the renovation? But how complete is the renewal! As deep as was the fall, so great is the rising again. The fall threw us into the depths of the abyss; the rising brings us unto God in the person of Jesus Christ triumphant. Cease then to speak of Christianity as a religion which does not exalt man! Because it does not flatter his pride it has been concluded that it positively abased and denied him his legitimate honor. It is not true that pride leads to glory; it has but its vain shadow, and it drags man after it, in order to leave him in the mud, deceived and degraded. Christianity alone satisfies the thirst for glory, which has something legitimate in it when not perverted. For a fallen creature glory consists only in renewal, and renewal can begin only in recognition of the fall. Humility, say the Scriptures, goes before exaltation, that is to say, it alone conducts to glory. It is not an end, but a road. The end is the true glorification of human nature. Furthermore, while antichristian dogmas seek to hide the miseries of humanity, to cover its shame by artfully arranging the folds of a deceitful vail over its hideous wounds, Christianity tears the vail in order to heal the wounds. It takes by the hand that poor human creature, degra-

ded and fallen, by stooping to its level; it leads him by forgiveness to heaven; it makes him sit down there, and upon the very throne of God humanity recognizes its eternal glorification. It is thus that the religion of humility degrades and debases humanity!

But, my brethren, let not this assimilation between you and Jesus Christ, which you are right in urging very far according to the Scriptures, prevent you from recognizing the sole and special character of his royalty. Let us not forget that of him it was said, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. ii. 10, 11. We owe him adoration, and this should be marked in all our religious language. Let us have with him a heavenly intimacy, but let us shun that familiarity devoid of dignity which sometimes has too greatly impaired the sentiment of respect in the language employed by certain Christians. His vast love constantly fills up the distance between us and him; it stoops, like a tender brother, even to the dust in which we lie, to encourage and raise up the humblest Christian. Let us ever show that we understand that this loving Saviour is God, and let us ever manifest a practical faith in his kingly greatness. O sacred name of my Saviour, name both sweet and holy, we love to bend the knee before thee! Our divine King, whilst men insult thee, whilst they know thee not upon this earth watered with thy blood, we wish

to adore thee, and with our praises to cover up the outrages of thine enemies! Our respect equals our love. Friends and servants at once, according to thine own words, we lean upon thy heart with St. John, we fall at thy feet with Mary!

We have seen Jesus Christ rising from the dead and ascending his throne; we must know now how he reigns. His royalty is the royalty of love, and he makes of it a glorious ministry of compassion. He exercises it in heaven, first by his sovereign prayer. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," we read in the epistle to the Hebrews. Jesus Christ gathers together all our prayers, and adds to them his all-powerful Amen. Begun upon earth, in the depth of our hearts often broken and crushed, they are finished in his divine mouth. He bears before the Father our desires, our aspirations, our sorrows, and as he is the eternal Word, that is to say, the perfect expression of the thought and will of God, his prayer is heard before it is put in form. To pray thus is to reign, and whoever prays thus participates in this blessed reign. Let no one then go and allege the pretext of his unworthiness as a reason for refusing to pray. Unworthy of the favor you are, and will be always on the earth; but you are not alone in prayer. He in whose name you pray, and who prays with you, is worthy to be heard, for he is the great High Priest, the King of the new covenant. If the Son of God was not heard, who could be? But he is, and always. No one of our requests is lost; they are accepted and consecrated by him. Let them therefore unceasingly ascend toward him, let them go and mingle with his petitions,

and be blended with them as the tributary streams are blended with the forceful currents of a mighty river.

The kingship of Jesus Christ is manifested not only in his relations with the Father, but also in the power which he wields over humanity. We shall presently see to what extent this power is exercised; at present let us examine the mode in which it is operative. It is by the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ reigns over the hearts of men and governs them. As we have seen, it entered into his plans to give the Spirit to the world, and the sending into our souls of this mysterious agent of God's work is one of the marked characteristics of the kingship of Jesus Christ. This is the reign of the Holy Spirit. Christ, through him, is unceasingly present upon the earth; he inclines the hearts of men, he changes them, guides them, and renders them fruitful. Strangely erroneous views have been sometimes held concerning the operation of the Spirit of God. From a false idea of divine sovereignty, it has been transformed into a power resembling the irresistible forces of nature, the wind which bends or breaks the tree, or the lightning which consumes it. Thus have been confounded two domains entirely distinct: that of necessity and that of freedom, the external world and the moral world. Men imagined that they were glorifying grace while materializing it, for it is materializing it to deprive it of its spiritual and moral character. Nowhere does Scripture exhibit to us the Holy Spirit as a power that can not be resisted. On the contrary, we are taught that we can repulse

and grieve him. He is granted only to those who seek for him. The reign of Jesus Christ has therefore nothing in common with that species of divine absolutism to which it has been too often compared. This absolutism, very far from promoting the glory of God, impairs that glory; in fact, in order to reign over free beings infinitely more power is needed than to reign over beings that are passive and inert. To direct creatures endowed with intelligence and free will is infinitely greater than to lead creatures unable either to resist or to obey. To change the will is a greater thing than to abolish it. Absolutism is a force of the material world; there lies its domain; morally it is powerless; whenever it has sought to enter the spiritual domain, it has been driven thence in ignominy. Our ideas concerning liberty of conscience are based upon the very fact of its incompetence with regard to all which proceeds from the soul and the will. To transform grace into a species of divine absolutism, by regarding it as an irresistible power, is to divest it of its true character; we hold indeed that it is depriving God of his proper sovereignty, under pretext of maintaining it. His sovereignty is above all else to be admired in that it harmonizes with liberty, and in that it attains its own ends while fully establishing liberty. The Spirit of God penetrates us, and transforms us while triumphing over our resistance; grace is a divine persuasion; it is not by a stroke of authority, it is by a secret and gentle influence that it wins us, and the signal manifestations of its power are connected, as in the conversion of Paul, with a protracted inward struggle,

the consummation of which may be rapidly effected. Let men cease, then, to confound Christianity with fatalism, swayed by a logical system justifiable three centuries ago as a weapon of warfare in the great conflict with Catholic Pelagianism, but which to-day would turn against those handling it, and would smite them with a deadly stroke by identifying them with cotemporary Pantheism. Let not the reign of Jesus Christ be assimilated to that which is worst upon the earth; let not the sovereignty of God be identified with absolutism, or the free and powerful Spirit of God be degraded to the order of material and mechanical forces.*

Having set forth the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, it still remains for us to inquire in what manner he establishes it upon the earth. Our text teaches us that it comprehends two domains: one more general, and one more special. "He was preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world." The preaching of the gospel is a first unfolding of the kingship of Christ upon the earth; it

* We know well the answer that will be given; we shall be referred to the ninth chapter of Romans. We are persuaded that the ordinary exegesis of that passage is very superficial. Sufficient consideration is not paid to the general thesis maintained by the apostle; his aim being to uphold against the Jew the freedom of the grace of God, as not being bound to any natural fact. In the last part of the chapter, he employs an overwhelming kind of argumentation, suited to crush his opponent, and which consists definitively in refusing the discussion; but it would be an absolute perversion of the authority of the Scriptures to fasten upon this isolated passage, and not interpret it by the whole Bible, and by so many words of this same apostle which are a natural commentary upon it.

See the development of St. Paul's doctrine in vol. ii. of our *History of the Three First Centuries of the Church.*

is a manifestation of his power which is everywhere diffused. The faith of Christians is a manifestation more real and more elevated, for Christ's royalty over the church is eminently the royalty of Christ. Let us consider this twofold aspect of his kingly dignity.

The apostle Paul regarded the preaching of the gospel as constituting a part of the mystery of godliness. We do not attribute to it sufficient importance. In itself, even before it has produced faith, it wields an immense influence. It puts in circulation a multitude of true and fruitful ideas, which, proceeding from revelation, create a kind of moral atmosphere, which men can not possibly avoid breathing. By a singular inconsequence, the gospel is more quickly realized in the social than in the individual sphere. Doubtless it is easier to draw from it general consequences than the individual consequence, in which is implied self-renunciation. However this may be, it is certain that the preaching of the gospel has exerted a marked influence upon the history of humanity. It was preached to the pagans, and paganism, quietly undermined by it, crumbled stone by stone, until, like a gigantic ruin, the whole mass fell to the ground. We have the right to speak of a Christian civilization, in opposition to a pagan civilization. The modern world has been gradually molded by the gospel; respect for man as man, care for the poor, freedom of thought and of belief, — all these divine features which distinguish it more or less, and without which it would fall into barbarism, are to be ascribed to the preaching of the gospel.

And what a crowd of thoughts and sentiments, entirely unknown to the pagan world, lie at the basis of the modern literatures. If we combine all these facts, we are justified in approving the beautiful words of a great thinker: "You could not abolish Christianity without thereby plucking up the root of what is good and beautiful in that civilization of which you make your boast." * We recognize the kingly power of Jesus Christ, the royalty of the truth, in these general results of evangelical preaching; and we firmly believe that the future has in store for us more than one benign application of Christian principles in the social domain.

But the preaching of the gospel reveals in a deeper sense the royalty of Jesus Christ. His word, by itself alone, is a power. It can not die without an echo and sink into nothingness. It can not return to him without effect. Wherever it goes forth, there are ineffaceable traces of its career, — its pathway glowing with redeeming love, or marked with the avenging thunderbolt. It binds or it unbinds. Rejected, it shakes off the dust from the feet of its divine messengers, in whose persons it has been repulsed afresh, and this dust is the seed of severe judgments from God. When this word enters a new country, it is not certain that we shall see it eagerly welcomed, but it is certain that it will produce the most striking effects. It will trouble their souls and arouse their consciences. Men will perceive that it has come, by the wrath which it excites, and by the thanksgivings which it inspires. It will draw down

* Schleiermacher, *Reden uber die Religion.*

upon that country either blessing or cursing, according as it shall be received. Like results occur with regard to the individual soul that is brought into contact with it. It is a moment of fearful solemnity when the gospel makes its approach to a man. Everything in his future life hangs upon his reception or rejection of it. The word of God will return to heaven, to announce there his salvation, or to bring in the charge that his heart is hardened. It is this word which henceforth exercises judgment upon the earth. "He hath one that judgeth him," said Jesus Christ; "the word which I have spoken." An infallible judge, it constrains the hearts of men to unvail themselves before this tribunal, in order to manifest whether they love darkness or light. By its declaration, so plain and so hostile to sin, it tears off from them the mask of worldly honesty; they are exposed in their nakedness. They can not escape from its power; often, by a single word, they are pierced through and through. It is the two-edged sword which reaches to the dividing asunder of the joints and the marrow. Even during the period of Christ's ministry this influence of his word made itself felt; but it was restricted, because the gospel was not yet preached to all the nations of the earth. It had been proclaimed only to the Jews. Thus the apostle characterizes it as a fact of high importance that God manifested in the flesh should be preached to the Gentiles. Henceforth the kingly sway of the word of God, and consequently of Jesus Christ, will be without bounds. It may extend over the entire world; Christian missions, which are ever subduing

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unto him new domains, are enlarging his empire day by day, and are directly contributing to the glorification of Christ as king.

After having said, "He was preached unto the Gentiles," the apostle adds, "he was believed on in the world." Genuine faith is found only in the church. It is the church consequently of which mention is here made. Jesus Christ reigns over her in an altogether special sense. That general kingship over the world by the preaching of the gospel does not suffice for him. He has his people who acknowledge only his laws, and the Christian church composes that people; not this or that one of its fragments, but the total church, in its veritable, that is to say spiritual, catholicity. Jesus Christ is her sole head; he governs her in all things; he nourishes her with his life; he multiplies unto her his gifts; it is from him that she derives her substance in its entirety, as in each one of her members. Therefore she owes to him absolute and undivided submission. Not to depend upon him alone, to place herself in any degree under the tutelage of a human power, is to challenge the royalty of Jesus Christ, it is to take from him a portion of it. From this point of view it is impossible to hesitate with regard to the constitution to be given to the church. The question is of such simplicity that its solution forces itself upon the good sense of the Christian. Is it true, yes or no, that Jesus Christ is the king of the church? If he is her king, does it not follow that the church ought not to recognize any other authority than his own? Is she in her normal condition when subject to sinful man? Is not her loss in freedom so much taken away from Jesus

Christ? If the mind is not intent upon vain subtilties, if it is satisfied with a categorical reply, it will surely be acknowledged that the kingship of Christ implies the church's complete independence. Let her ever remember that this independence has no worth except as there results from it an obedience to her divine King that is continually growing in truth and inward power. He desires to reign over her only through love, for the head of the church is at the same time her spouse. It is by fervently loving him, by uniting herself to him with ever-increasing strength, that she can most truly glorify him. Let not the Christians of our generation, by their spiritual coldness, refuse to participate in this blessed reign of love.

St. Paul sums up in one word, at the close, all the divine characteristics of the royalty of Christ: "He was received up into glory." His resurrection, his ascension, the power of the gospel over the world, and his sovereign authority over the church, constituted in truth a rising to glory. But this glorious exaltation of the Redeemer, which is absolute in one sense, is progressive in another; the kingly power must be progressively extended over the earth, and the succession of human generations during the past eighteen centuries has had no other end than to contribute to the development of God's kingdom, — identical with the reign of his Son. Nothing remains to be added to the glory of Christianity as it is contained in the gospel; but in passing through our limited understandings and our defiled hearts, it has necessarily undergone more than one alteration. For a long time the Christianity

of the church has not been the primitive Christianity, that of Jesus Christ and the gospel. It did not enter into the plans of God to preserve his revelation from all harm, for in that case it would have been necessary that the church place it out of our reach, and bury it in the earth, like the talent of the wicked servant in the parable. On the contrary, God desired that we should assimilate his truth to ourselves by a personal effort, and that Christ should become truly Christ in us. But in order to reach this final term of religious history, many sorrowful experiences, many gropings after light, many falls and devious ways, were inevitable. Nevertheless, the divine end has always been pursued, and from age to age Christianity has been exalted in glory, notwithstanding the persistent efforts of the antichristian spirit which has left it no truce and no repose.

From the midst of the bloody persecutions of the first centuries it was gloriously exalted, in spite of heresy and oppression, being victorious over that old Roman world which hoped to crush it in its cradle. From the midst of the thick darkness of the Middle Ages, in spite of the Church of Rome, heiress of pagan persecutors, it was gloriously exalted by means of a heroic return to the apostolic age, thus withdrawing the Book of God from under the bushel with which human traditions covered it. From the midst of the fearful infidelity of the last century it has become gloriously exalted, renewing its life and its youth. From the anguished bosom of our nineteenth century it has been gloriously exalted, treading under foot all that which is contrary to it, breaking the bonds of an unsuffering

dogmatism, silencing the voice of a destructive criticism, freeing itself from the shackles of state religions, and reconquering the spirituality of the first days of the church, in its doctrine and in its life. Once again, and for the last time, it shall be exalted in glory, when the Son of God, hearing the long sighing of his church, shall re-appear, at the appointed time, in a splendid manner, to engage in a final conflict with Antichrist, to raise the dead, to judge the world, to crown his own people, and to consummate the triumph which he gained eighteen centuries ago. Then shall come the end, the end of all which we know; the impenetrable vail of eternity falls again; we shall hear resounding only the song of the Lamb who was slain, and who has redeemed us, and we shall have only to join our voices with those which glorify him for ever and for ever.

We have concluded this series of discourses. In its successive phases, we have presented to you the infinite work of the redemption of the world. We have seen it beginning in heaven and in Eden, pursuing its way with slow steps during the obscure periods of the preparation, receiving its highest fulfillment in the life and death of Christ, and finally completed upon the throne of glory, on which he sat down after his resurrection, and to which he is drawing us by his Spirit. Our last word, our conclusion to which we are led by all which precedes, is to entreat you to go to him, the Redeemer and the King! No other answers like him to the want of our hearts. Minds tormented with doubt, you who wish to believe, and can not as yet believe because you have so long breathed the unwholesome air, saturated with skepticism and concupiscence,

which seems to be the moral atmosphere of our age; go to Christ the prophet, and he will give you those firm convictions for which you thirst; he will scatter your painful doubts, and will bring you into contact with a living truth which you shall never lose. Troubled hearts, who desire to bring to pass that which is good, but always fail, who tremble before an offended God, who in secret long for a gratuitous pardon, go to Christ, at once the victim and the high priest. Suffer yourselves to be covered with that restorative blood; it purifies and it appeases. Accept this great mystery of redemption. It is the very substance of Christianity. There are peace and holiness only beneath that cross. Feeble, mourning Christians, who know not how to enjoy the power and the glory that are yours, go to Christ the King, and the splendor of his victory shall be reflected upon you. You will no longer be sad witnesses of the compassion of God; you will speak of it, as it ought to be spoken of, with joy, with strength, and the assurance of at length reigning with him will give you courage now to participate in his sufferings. And let us all, whoever he may be, go to God, the Redeemer; and to the Father, who prepared salvation; to the Son, who accomplished it; and to the Holy Spirit, who realizes it anew in our hearts. To God, thrice holy, and eternally blessed, be honor, and praise, and glory, for ever!

THE END.

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